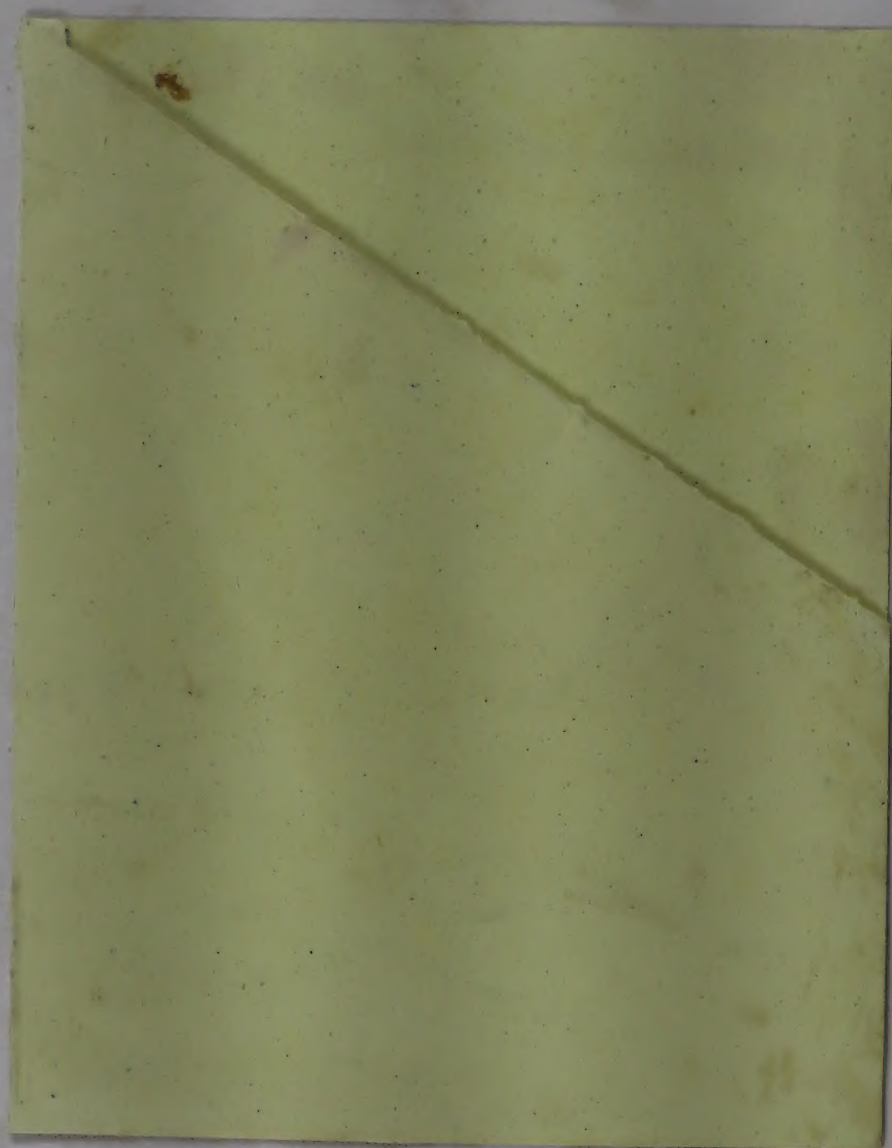


Communalism

The Razor's Edge





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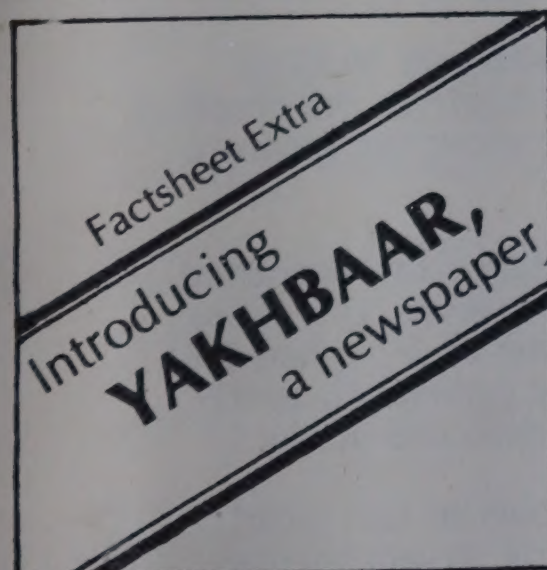
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Factsheet 2

Collective



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Editorial

When the second Factsheet Collective decided to undertake the preparation of a report on communalism in India, we were at once faced with several problems. These concerned the outlining of ideological approaches as well as evolving a methodology that would enable us to analyse a dimension of Indian political and social life that has been germane to the country's history for several centuries.

The task was ambitious. For how could we identify one rationale, one system of logic, and attempt to apply such a closed system to comprehend the several realities of communalism? Obviously such a limited intercession at one plane could never highlight the complexity and dynamism of Indian communalism, which in this case, we have restricted to the relationships between the Hindus and Muslims of India.

What this warranted was a larger, more commodious structure of enquiry. One that could accommodate the various and divergent forms of communalism while bearing in mind that these elements, as well as many more, were all part of a causal chain, one that was linked by a series of interdependent relationships.

The chain snaps, as in a riot, at its weakest link, but the entire structure gets shaken by the recoiling effect of the break. The particular agent that corrodes part of the chain has been a product of historical circumstances.

At first, in the mediaeval period, religious and social stress was heightened because of the clash of two conflicting belief systems which differed entirely right from the foundations upon which they were built — one polytheistic, the other monotheistic; one a myriad of civilisations already moribund and stagnant, the other a singular force of such power that it carved a crescent over the continent of Asia.

The inter-action between the two was defined from the outset and religion acquired a central place in the relationship that was to develop between Hindu and Muslims. What is notable, however, is that even as the adherents of the two religions learned to co-exist, albeit mutual ostracism and insularity, the political and economic structures of governance by and large remained unaffected. It was only towards the latter half of the Mughal period that economic and political upheavals created fissiparous tendencies leading to the decline of Mughal dominion and the rise of the so-called Hindu martial races like the Marathas, Rajputs, Jats and Sikhs — from whom so many legendary communal heroes were born.

British colonialism, however, intervened. In the period that followed, communalism, as we understand it today, acquired a sharp political edge. The forces that led to this were diverse and are the subject of close historical and sociological scrutiny that deals with circumstantial details. Certainly, the emergence of the notion of private property; the development of integrated revenue, education and communication systems with their bureaucracies; and, the commercialisation of some agricultural and industrial sectors of the colonial economy altered the material base of the relationship between the two communities.

Thus, the political arena, dominated by the bitter rivalries between Hindus and Muslims became the focal point of Indian communalism. The friction sublimated itself in the creation of politically communal reservations giving a concrete structure within which the separate nations theory gained ground.

The Partition sealed an earlier chapter of communal history and the Indian state entrusted itself with the onerous responsibility of upholding secularism. By then, however, the atmosphere was so vitiated and the hostility between Hindu-Muslim had become so ingrained that the individual, as well as his or her political environ, was predominantly communal, particularly in those areas where memories of the Partition era were immediate and acute.

By the mid-sixties, it was clear that the participation of the Indian citizen in the social and political spheres was governed by communal considerations. Economic developments in this period ensured the extension of these perceptions into yet another sphere of activity

and from then till today the riots that have struck mortal blows to secular statehood, in Allgarh, Moradabad, Bhiwandi, Baroda etc. appear to bear causal links with economic rivalries. Clearly however, the economic factor does not work in isolation from social and political hostility. Rather it forms the contemporary spearhead of a lengthy communal tradition.

It is evident from this very brief recapitulation that communalism is not a static entity that can be bound within a few chosen parameters. It has changed and evolved in a dynamic manner, embracing all developments in the country and touching the lives of millions of Indian citizens.

In fact, each unit of scrutiny, be it the individual, a communal organisation or party, a community and even the nation itself bears all the facets of the communal tradition, layer upon layer created by newer developments but always assimilated within a communal tautology.

Religion is, of course, the cornerstone above which this whole edifice is built but the credit for the brutal and tyrannical hold of communalism in India is not inherent in the profference of faith by the Hindu or Muslim. Instead, if we are concerned about communal perceptions and their violent forms of expression we must look for elements without, factors integral to the political, social and economic developments within the country. Here too, a framework of analysis which attempts to demarcate a particular facet within a time-specific frame has its obvious limitations. While it may be claimed that such an approach is a necessity for historical research, unless the conclusions of such research are not related to contemporary events, the issue of academic interest is by itself irrelevant.

This is because, communalism exists on an interface between tradition and modernity, history and journalism. It is at once a legacy of the past whose present is being constantly augmented. The predominant considerations we had in mind for this report was that it did not necessarily have to arrive with totality and certainty at one definitive approach or even propose any solutions or positions vis-a-vis present-day communalism. Instead we recognised several heirarchies of communalism and decided to explore some of them.

Thus, the essays in this collection are interventions at some of the various levels of communalism we could identify. While each of the essays stands on its own and is of contemporary relevance, there is no sum of the parts that will be found within.

"Keepers of our tradition," by Ashish Rajadhyaksha, the opening essay in this collection, has been placed first since we wanted to highlight the communal bias that has crept into the interpretation of our history. The communal tradition in India, the author says, has been fully complemented by academic rationales that justify the status quo ante. This legacy lives on till today making it difficult to challenge the basis on which communal parties like the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and the Jamaat-e-Islami operate.

In the next essay we have reproduced an abridged form of an essay which Imtiaz Ahmad had contributed to the EPW in 1969. On going through it, we found that the essay was still relevant even after a lapse of fifteen years. The author, who is a leading authority in the field of sociological analysis, argues that there is a dichotomy in the nature of the secular state that the Indian constitution has espoused since at the base Indian society is extremely vulnerable to communal pressures.

"Secular State, Communal Society", is followed by an analysis of the changes in the nature of communal riots. Asghar Ali Engineer argues that the late sixties form a hiatus. Before the Ahmedabad riots of 1969, communal violence was more incidental, spontaneous and restricted. Since then, however, the riots are shaped, even engineered, to serve political and economic interests which is why they now tend to be more widespread and prolonged.

In "Pointers from Meerut", Rajiv Tiwari, who visited the city after the riots in late 1982, highlights some aspects of what everyday communalism is comprised of and in passing also deals with how several important facts are concealed to protect the interests of Hindus.

A series of interviews with Bipan Chandra, Mushirul Hasan and Des Raj Goyal highlight the views of these leading historians on contemporary communal trends.

While Hindu and Muslim communal parties do legitimately exist in the country, we thought that the existence of several Muslim communal parties in the country warranted an in-depth treatment. For, while Hindu communal parties do enjoy popular support, the appeal of Muslim parties is considerably enhanced by a blatant religious sanction. Moin Shakir, a well-known historian, outlines the structures and ideological platforms of three important Muslim parties in "In the name of Islam".

Since we have constantly sought to balance the two communal traditions, the next essay by Rajiv Tiwari is in the form of "An open letter to Balasaheb Deoras", who is the Sar Sangh Chalak of the RSS. While the "letter" can be easily misconstrued as a personal attack, it must be borne in mind that the form employed is merely a vehicle for critically examining the chief planks of appeal of a Hindu communal organisation.

"From Shahehshah to Miyanbhai" by Iqbal Masud, a well-known commentator, touches upon the grey area of the development of a Muslim stereotype in popular cinema. While the essay is short, it does establish a causal relationship between the sociological base and its expression in mass culture.

The last section, "Counterpoints", is a collection made from diverse sources chiefly dealing with the key areas of minority participation in a broader national mainstream.

Finally, we introduce "Yakhbaar" which was partly conceived to spoof the biases evident even in the leading national dailies. We believe, however, that it has gone beyond this original purpose and conveys bits of information which were difficult to include otherwise. We now hope that "Yakhbaar" will become a regular feature, accompanying every "Fact-sheet".

We have always been extremely conscious of the visual element that must accompany the text. But, in this issue, we were inhibited by not being able to document the subject photographically, unlike the "Factsheet" on Bombay's Textile Strike. We overcame this problem with the assistance of Ghulam Shaikh, Mansur Badri and Manjula Padmanabhan who generously provided us with the graphic relief that we required so urgently.

In conclusion, we are aware that this issue has its limitations. So much has been written on the subject that at times we felt that there was little to add. However, we carried on in the hope that even if we illuminate a few select particular areas which concerned us, our contribution would not be remiss.

We are not overly pessimistic about the recent spurt in communal violence which the country is witnessing. Even though the distinct growth in the number of small, local communal groups is disturbing, we believe that such developments have to be viewed within the framework of present political, economic and social determinants which have brought to the surface tensions which the country will have to resolve. Regionalism, casteism and communalism form an integral part of the country's development. The radical departure from outmoded forms of thought which technology forces upon us, creates tensions and disturbs established social and political hierarchies. This we know has not, cannot and will not move in a straight line, from point to point. Rather, the route so far has been marked by a series of elliptical curves, each of which tracks different facets of human responses in the wake of technological changes, which outpace the capability of the human psyche to absorb and assimilate the changes.

Though each communal riot is a retrograde expression it also signifies that Indian society is rapidly being transformed. While this does not imply that we condone communalism, communal hierarchies. Thus, the problem cannot be wished away; it will remain an integral part of Indian politics and society until the path of economic development itself undergoes a radical change.



Keepers Of Our Traditions

The men who have written our communal history

As we fight the more obvious, militant expressions of communalism, says Ashish Rajadhyaksha, we should also recognise its more subtle forms — a well-entrenched conservatism among both Hindus and Muslims, which has traditionally defined 'official' history.

“It is ... extraordinary how the bourgeois class, both among the Hindus and the Muslims succeeded, in the sacred name of religion, in getting a measure of mass-sympathy and support for programmes and demands which had nothing to do with the masses, or even the lower-middle class ... These narrow political demands, benefitting at the most a small number of the upper-middle classes, were cleverly made to appear to be the demands of the masses of that particular religious group. Religious passion was hitched on to them to hide their barrenness.”

Jawaharlal Nehru ("An Autobiography" page 138)

“... those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.”

M.K. Gandhi ("Complete Works," Vol. 3, page 217)

Off Baroda's Lehipura Gate, a small but garish temple bears a newly-painted sign : "Photography Strickly Prohibited". Cosmetic metallic facades gleam in the sun with the usual sight of people selling Hindu religious literature around it. What might have been little more than a normal roadside temple in Baroda, today bears new significance. For just beyond the gate, in some of the most squalid and dilapidated lanes of the city, lies a vast Muslim ghetto, the scene of violent communal clashes between September and December 1982.

On April 3, 1983, little saffron flags in Calicut, Kerala, flutter by the roadside on trees and telegraph poles, heralding the arrival of the RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras. Over twenty busloads of RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) volunteers thunder into the city precincts. Crowds, herded into the football stadium by the thousands, come down the street in a disciplined, three-abreast line that continues throughout the afternoon. A colleague recalls that Hitler too held his big speeches in football stadia...

* * * * *

Saffron, representing traditional Brahmin purity, the colour of the religious **vastra**, the colour of Shivaji's flag, has become the new symbol of Hindu revivalism. Today it has resurged to represent a regional chauvinism which is, at its most glaring extreme, a naked communalism. **Shobha-yatras**, traditional religious display-processions, these days often bear the saffron-green colours of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). Festivals of a relatively recent origin, like Shivaji Jayanti and Ram Navami are now inevitably accompanied by displays of communal militance — in processions that must pass through areas where communal sensibilities run high, in **aartis** that must be performed before mosques.

It doesn't take an Assam to see the consequence of such everyday acts of communal intransigence, although Assam can demonstrate its scale. The rise of communalist sentiment among India's urban middle and lower classes, while partly a natural phenomenon of post-Partition India, has been carefully orchestrated, built up to its present peak by some of the largest cadre-based organisations active in the country.

In 1979 the country was hit by 304 riots, in 1980 by 427, and in 1981 by 319. While a few may have been caused by immediate frictions between two large religious communities possessing admittedly different lifestyles and customs, most riots were caused by the deliberate inflammatory tactics of organisations who have an explicit communal programme.

It is obvious that conditions in India, since the immediate pre-Independence period and later, have been conducive to the whipping up of communal sentiments. But despite a near-daily occurrence of the confrontations that result out of such hysteria and the tangible experience of communal animosity in India's urban areas, we still lack



"Dharmaveer Sambhaji Nagar" — an entrance to an RSS camp, Pune.

a proper framework to analyse the phenomenon. Almost every ideology that has confronted communalism has sought to interpret, in its own terms, the history of Hindu-Muslim relations in India. Such a repeated imposing upon history of present divides has proved to be a major barrier in comprehending communalism. As historian Romila Thapar warns, "It is often forgotten that historical interpretation can be the product of a contemporary ideology".

Most debates on communalism usually begin with an analysis of the strong tinge of Hindu revivalism that accompanied the nationalist movement. Bipan Chandra points out that in their search for a national identity that would pre-date the British, Indian nationalists were reluctant to accept the period of Mughal dominion as representative of their aspirations. Since this period was too close and fresh in people's memory to lend itself to an "official" interpretation, the Aryan, 'Vedic', period was chosen to represent all that was glorious in India's past. In the eyes of Hindu nationalists, the Vedic age came to symbolise the pinnacle of Indian civilisation.

The view that this period represented an epochal era in Indian history, and even world civilisation, was further buttressed by emphasising its decline during Mughal and British domination. The precept that such maleficence was now finally being reversed found large acceptance among Hindu nationalists. This has led Muslim sociologists and historians to point out that while the official Congress programme was avowedly secular, and leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru did much to implement secularism, the nationalist movement itself never practiced secularism because of its inherently Hindu chauvinistic impulses. From leaders like Sardar Patel down to grassroots organisers, the dominant tradition in the Congress remained Hindu.

A second position accepts the prevalence of such discrimination but also emphasises the strong tendency towards pan-Islamism to which Indian Muslims are still subject. It contends that visions of a glorious past are an integral part of modern nationalism but pan-Islamism, particularly of the post-Independence period, remains unique to the country. It further contends that to attribute the deep communal divide merely to revivalism and not to more active forces, is an entirely inadequate explanation.

A third position would seek to detach the communal problem from its religious base. This view maintains that religious belief must not be confused with religious identity; only the latter may be termed communal. Therefore, to speak of communalism as an inevitable consequence of existing religious differences would be as absurd as to say that Nazism was an inevitable consequence of the distinction between German Christians and German Jews. Such a position would disagree with the assumption that communalism can only be got rid of by a secular re-orientation of the religious source itself.

Clearly, these are not mutually exclusive positions.

"India developed the spiritual mind working upon the other powers of man and exceeding them, the intuitive reason, the philosophical harmony of the dharma informed by the religious spirit, the sense of the eternal and the infinite."
- Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

Celebrating Shivaji Jayanti — a mock facade of Raigad Fort on a street corner, Bombay.



They disagree merely on the immediate agencies they would seek to blame for the perpetuation of the communal divide. In this essay we will deal with the key issues that recur in all these positions, and, in elaborating upon their historical contexts, place them within the debate on communalism that rages till today.

Communal Strains In History

With the decline of the Mughal empire and the rise of small Hindu kingdoms came a resurgence of militant Hinduism. Just as Shivaji invoked the militant Bhawani and Guru Gobind Singh turned to the Shakti, the manifestations of Kali came to be objects of prayer in eastern Indian households where they were practically unknown before the 18th century. In the same way as the ransacking of temples and imposition of *jaziya* had come to signify Muslim supremacy during the Mughal period, so issues like cow-slaughter now came to signal the return of Hindu power.

Large-scale communal riots in Gujarat in the 18th century were apparently caused due to the issue of cow-slaughter. One such riot has a remarkably contemporary ring to it in the immediate event that sparked it off : a Hindu youth playing Holi, threw colour over a passing Muslim, who instantly sought retaliation.

The early to mid-19th century saw the rise of various Hindu social reform groups. In Calcutta, Raja Ram Mohan Roy started the Brahmo Samaj. Similarly, in Bombay the Prarthna Samaj was founded. The social-reformism of this period was the result of strong opposition against the retrograde practices of Hindu society, like *sati* and female infanticide. But, it is important to note that men like Ram Mohan Roy were never critical of, nor did they seek to change, the basic social structure of Hinduism.

The rise of a Hindu middle-class, which came with the introduction of the liberal values that permeated British colonialism, was to be the originator of Indian nationalism. But since the Hindu tenets that held this class together were never challenged, the nationalist identity was also emphasised in the same terms. It was first expressed by writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and grew to major dimensions with the establishment of missions like those founded by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Brahmo Samajist social reformism also turned revivalist under the leadership of Devendranath Tagore and while a progressive group under the leadership of Keshub Chandra Sen broke away from it in 1865, they were completely overwhelmed by the much wider resurgence of militant Hindu sentiment embodied by the rise of Dayanand Saraswati and Aurobindo.

In Maharashtra this trend was more evident than in Bengal. Leaders like Vishnushashtri Chiplunkar and, later, Bal Gangadhar Tilak threw their weight entirely against the progressive social reformists. They held the opinion that there was nothing basically wrong with Hindu society, the few problems that existed would sort themselves out

मंदिर सकाळी ६ ते १२
व दुपारी ३ ते रात्री १०
वाजे पर्यंत खुले राहील.

मंदिर फक्त हिंदू
धर्मियां साठी खुले आहे.

चप्पल चोर पासून
सावध रहावे.

"For Hindus Only" : a signboard outside Prabhadevi Temple, Bombay

once the British were thrown out. They, therefore, called for a ceasing of all political and social activity outside of the anti-British mainstream. This anti-imperialism which emanated from both Hindu and Muslim conservative groups has been interpreted as a progressive tradition; but as we shall see, it would yield negative results later when their conservatism manifested itself blatantly after the transfer of power.

If the rise of militant Hindu nationalism took place with the growth of a middle-class that was exposed to Western education and the commercial opportunities provided by the British, with the Muslims a conservative tradition was established precisely because of the lack of such a dynamic. The erstwhile Muslim elite of the Mughal period which was mainly landed turned more and more insular, often retreating into their **jagirs** where they indulged themselves in courtly decadence. They shunned British education and refused to actively assert themselves in trade and commerce. To justify such a retreat they invoked religious sanctions and declared that British India was a heretical country of which Muslims could not be part.

This conservatism was reflected in the rise of the Wahabi movement in northern and central India and in the Farizi movement in east India. The Wahabi movement was inspired by Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab, a Saudi Arabian, who led a protest in the 18th century against what he claimed were 'innovations' in Islam that had no Koranic sanction. The Wahabi and Farizi cults forbade the prayers of **Id** and **Jumma**, since they thought that the conditions in India were not congenial to the growth of Islam. They declared British education a sin, and banned it except in very special circumstances. For instance, one of the **fatwas** of Shah Abdul Aziz, the Ulema leader, sanctioned Western education since it would lead to "knowing the secret meanings of the words (of the enemy)".

These conservatives were pretty much in control of Muslim society, and it was not until the late nineteenth century when leaders like Sir Syed Ahmad and the Aligarh school emerged that progressive education was finally made available to Muslims. But by then, the conservative Muslim leaders had succeeded, to an extent, in adapting themselves to the changing political climate, and were to be a strong lobby in the nationalist movement. This asserted itself vigorously in the Khilafat movement which swept India during the period 1915-17.

Khilafat : The Rise Of The Conservatives

The myth of Muslim monolithism, of a Muslim people politically and culturally united as separate from "Indians" has been almost solely a creation of religious and conservative Muslim leaders. Leaders like Shah Waliullah, the ideological founder of the Ulema (the priestly class) were the first to put forth such precepts. These were later accepted and expanded and little thought was given to the fact that Muslim society itself was divided by cleavages of caste and sect.

"It should be pointed out that... Rammohun never regarded himself as anything but a Hindu, and that he stoutly denied to the last day of his life the allegation that he was founding a separate sect outside the pale of Hinduism... He asserted that his ideas about the unity of Godhead and the rejection of idol worship were in conformity with the true spirit of original Hinduism..."

— Dr Amibatta Mukherjee
(Religious Reform in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century)

From the Mughal period, Muslims have been divided into **ashraf** (upper caste, usually foreigner, and inevitably holding a high post in the courtly hierarchy), **ajlaf** (lower caste, usually a converted Hindu) and **riyazil** (untouchable, also called **kamina**). Consequently lower Muslim castes have often had more in common with their regional customs than with the Islamic practices dictated by a doctrinaire elite.

If despite this they have still maintained a semblance of monolithic unity, it is only because of the Ulema and the religious control that is exercised through the **madarasas** and **maktabs** that impart religious education all over the country.

New Muslim Leadership

By the early twentieth century, however, a new urban Muslim leadership had begun to seriously undermine the dominance of the Ulema. "Thus, for the first time in history we find two types of Muslim intelligentsia, educated and trained in two different academic and intellectual traditions, strange to each other and dividing the society into conflicting attitudes, inclinations, priorities and interests. This had never happened before in such glaring terms".

The Khilafat issue was eagerly seized upon by all the factions within the nationalist movement; the fledgeling Muslim League and the Ulema were, of course, directly concerned. The Congress too took up the issue because Gandhi felt that this was an opportunity to demonstrate the solidarity of the Congress with the Muslims. The Muslim League, dominated by educated professionals after 1911, needed the Ulema to rally the vast sections of Muslim society they still controlled, and the Ulema saw this as an ideal point to make a decisive entry into nationalist politics.

Mushirul Hasan writes, "Ideologically they (the League and the Ulema) had nothing in common, but this did not prevent them from combining against what they commonly perceived as a threat to Islam. The orthodox and the anglicised were drawn together and as in a flash of lightning, saw that after all they were not too unlike each other as they had imagined (Mohammed Ali's words)".

Gandhi's decision to induct theology and religion into nationalist politics was obviously fraught with danger. It led to the heightening of religious issues and detracted from the more progressive and even anti-colonial drive of the Khilafat agitation. Soon after their entry, the Ulema made a determined bid to take over the Muslim League itself. They kept pushing Gandhi to take a more militant stand on the question of minorities, and to emphasise religious issues over nationalist ones.

According to Mushirul Hasan, the Ulema were not to last long in politics since the decision of the Turkish national assembly to separate the Khalifa from the Sultanate "took

Bipan Chandra Pal attacking the Ali Brothers; Mohamed & Shauket, for 'pan-Islamism':

"They are Mahomedans first and Indians next ... their patriotism is not territorial but extra-territorial (designed to) protect what still remains to the Moslems of their once-splendid empire against further encroachments.

"The Indian pan-Islamist (is not interested) in an early settlement of the present political unrest in this country. (because it offers him) the only possibility of securing the hegemony of the Indian continent and thus use the forces and resources of the Indian empire freed from the yoke of Great Britain for the realisation of his dream of a new Caliphate whose flag will fly over three continents."

the wind out of their sails". Nevertheless, the conservative tradition had been re-emphasised and a two-hundred year-old past had been restated in contemporary terms. From now on the problems of the Muslim minority were firmly placed within an ideology of separatism.

A Theory Of Two Nations

This tradition of conservatism culminated in what came to be called the "two-nation theory", a theory justifying a geographically separate Pakistan on the grounds that Muslims had never been a part of India.

Poet Mohammed Iqbal, who is believed to have been the first to propose this premise and give it an ideological thrust, emphasised that Islam was not only an ethical ideal but also a certain kind of **polity**. To limit Islam as merely one religion among others, as the secular programme promised, was to deny Muslims the freedom of religion, for Islam was nothing without the social order it postulated.

A characteristic of most Islamic states is the attempt which is made to establish governance along Koranic lines, to assume that solutions to problems, even those of a day-to-day nature, are to be found in the Holy Book as interpreted by the Shariat. Naturally, as sole interpreters of the Koran, as men who had the sole right to decide what had Koranic sanction and what did not, the Ulema and the religious clergy became an indispensable part of state functioning. It is often stated that Iqbal was not communal. This is probably true since one aspect of his demand for a separate Muslim region (he never asked for a separate statehood) was that Islam in India should rid itself of the stamp of "Arab imperialism".

Iqbal had merely demanded a federal state of the North-West reserved for Muslims. But, in 1935, Dr. Sayed Lateef postulated the idea that India should be divided into 15 zones, 11 of which should be Hindu and four Muslim. The Cambridge group, however, demanded nothing less than "a separate federation of our own outside India". Thus the demand for Pakistan snowballed, culminating in a final non-compromise demand for a separate state made by Muhammed Ali Jinnah.

Gandhi And The Indian Bourgeoisie

It is possible to see that, despite the various programmes for modernisation which the British bequeathed, the Indian social-reformists and, later, the Indian bourgeoisie, have failed to carry through a progressive democratic revolution which would place religion in a modern context. The framework that Marx refers to when he describes religion as "at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress" has never been evident, even among our apparently progressive political leaders.

The enormous difficulty that even our liberal sections continue to face in severing their ties from religious

Mohamed Ali in
reply:

"Theocracy is the fundamental principle of every religion, unless it is an old curiosity shop with nothing but a mass of old antiquated ritual. Nationalism, if it is not corrected by the larger idea of Universal Brotherhood, and is only based on the formula 'My country right or wrong' is, as the last War has only too clearly proved, a curse to humanity."

"India, constituted as it is at the present moment, is not the name of one single nation. It is, in fact, the designation of a state created by the British for the first time in history. It includes peoples who have never previously formed part of the Indian nation... One of such peoples is our own nation (Pakistan)"

- The Cambridge Group, provided by Chaudhury Rahmat Ali.

conservatives is evident. Our ruling class has traditionally tolerated such conservatives because of their political usefulness. The British tolerated them, even sought to make use of them; the Indian bourgeoisie continues to work in tandem with them. The explanation of why they have not been able to, or have chosen not to sever ties remains unformulated.

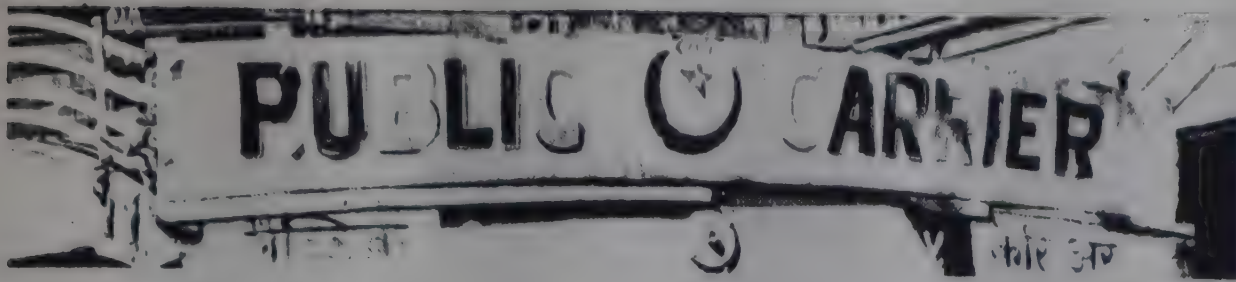
Following World War II, the Congress, still led by progressives like Nehru, was nevertheless becoming an umbrella for increasingly disparate and heterogeneous groups. It had come to rely on feudal caste groups like the Patels of Gujarat, the Marathas of Maharashtra, and the Thakurs of U.P. who become powerful votaries and substantially augmented its political power-base. The Indian industrialists, who had become a considerable force following the War, were, as A.R. Desai has pointed out, practically "subsidising the Gandhian movement".

As a consequence, the very measures Nehru hoped to implement, which in his dreams would lead India to enlightenment, were distorted to perpetuate traditional underdevelopment. Just as our nationalist bourgeois class professed Gandhism, even wore khadi and made public speeches supporting Gandhi, while assiduously maintaining its parochial and communal outlook on trade and society, so they often thought nothing of making individual fortunes by exploiting traditionally underdeveloped, decentralised sectors.

G.D. Birla, an avowed Gandhian, was not above giving Rs. 3000 per month to four Hindu Mahasabha leaders each, including Savarkar, to ensure that they did not harm his interests. More recently, Mrs. Gandhi, at least at one time a representative of the progressive bourgeoisie, never broke the hold Acharya Vinobha Bhave had on her, by which he all but passed into law the blatantly communal demand for a ban on cow-slaughter.

Desai writes that this class supported Gandhi mainly because his demands for non-violence, his idealisation of poverty etc. were effective in keeping the lower classes from wresting more specific economic concessions from the Indian ruling class. This must be recognised as substantially true, but the tragedy perhaps lies elsewhere. It is that the communal divide, which is little more than another kind of social divide that capitalism should be expected to eradicate, has effectively adapted itself to the present environment. The rulers have changed, but the instruments of rule have remained the same.





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Communalism Today

In India today, the extreme right-wing, which presents a major fascist threat, mainly takes on a communal guise. With an M.G. Ramachandran or a Shiv Sena adherent this can overflow into regional chauvinism or even casteism. With parties like the Bhartiya Janata Party, communalism has practically been institutionalised into a temporarily valid manifesto.

Gandhi has often been accused of having been the man who tinged the nationalist movement with Hindu colours. While this may be true it must also be noted that unlike the present communal organisations that would speak of 'Gandhian Socialism' Gandhi himself used religion to mobilise the masses. He did, to that extent, thwart the conservatives, like the Hindu Mahasabha leaders, and established the beginning of an indigenous bourgeois revolution.

The Mahasabha originally established by leaders like Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya, was initially successful because it expressed the dissatisfaction of the right-wing members of the Congress to Gandhi's overtures to the Muslims during Khilafat. Initially, the Mahasabha sought to establish a political base of its own, and even fought against the Congress in the 1937 and 1946 elections — with disastrous results. Politically the Mahasabha was never very strong, but this should not detract from the enormous cultural impact it has had on Hindu communalism. It remains the first organisation to give expression to latent communal tensions, and to extend them into a programme.

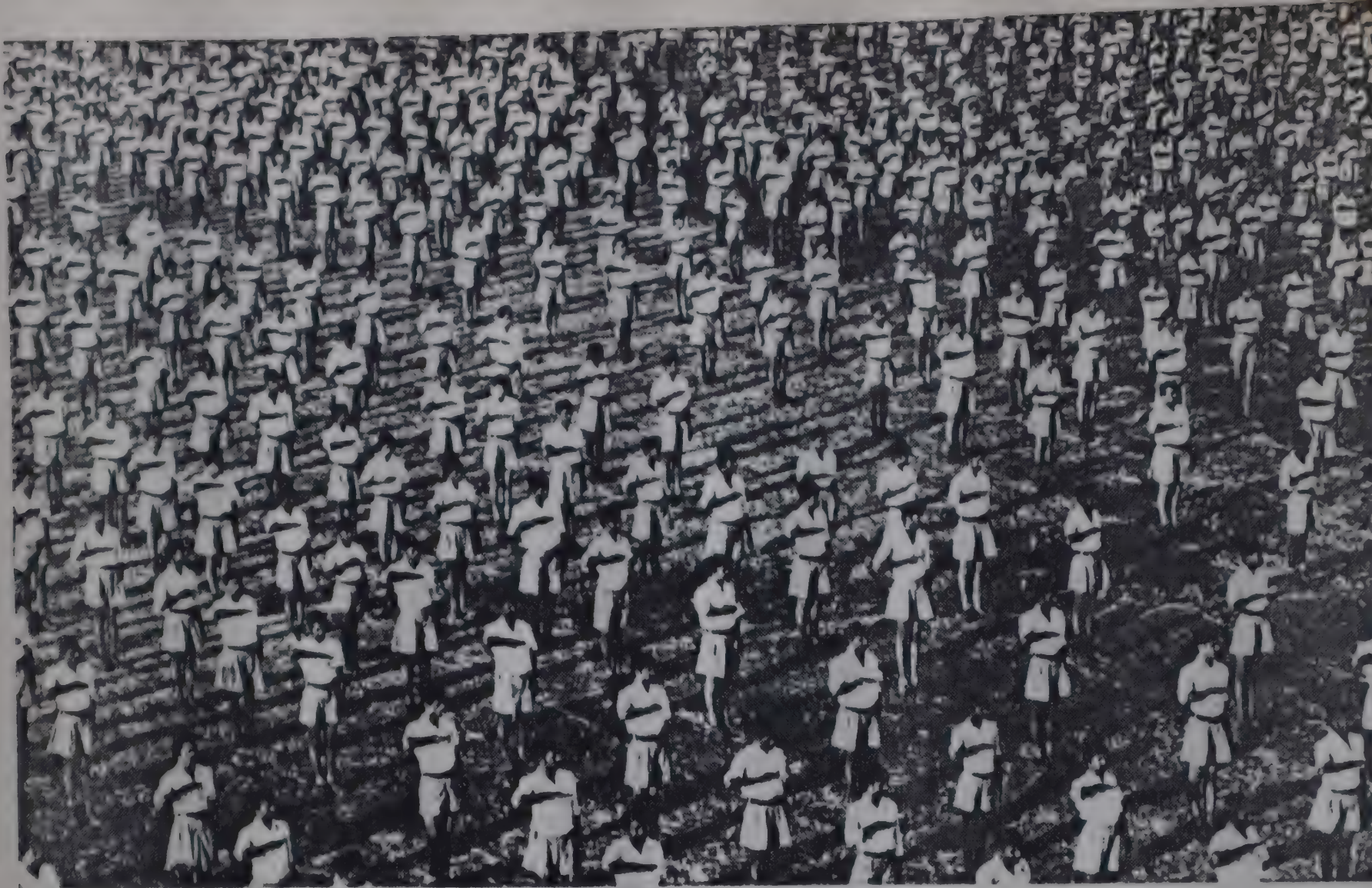
The ban imposed upon the Mahasabha by the Congress in 1948, and their regrouping under the Jana Sangh label in 1951, ushered in what we may now describe as the "New Communal Programme". This has manifested itself in a militant perpetuation of Hinduism. It is characterised by the demands to make Sanskrit compulsory, adapt all languages to the devnagiri script etc. The advocates of Hindu nationalism have taken every opportunity to prevent minority sections from harbouring any economic or political aspirations.

In stable conditions, these communal organisations concentrate on building their cadres, fighting reservation policies and other measures designed to help minorities. In unstable conditions, they usually swing into battle, creating communal riots whenever possible and, as in Assam, even masterminding vast pogroms.

It is ridiculous to equate all this activity with religious issues. Indeed, religion seems to hardly play any role

Nurturing ground for communal sentiments: A 'Kreedha Mandal' decorated on Shivaji Jayanti.





in the actual building up of RSS cadres. The average RSS or Shiv Sena volunteer, for instance, is attracted to these organisations mainly because their militance and discipline create an identity and pride, albeit false, which is otherwise lacking. To that extent, despite their religious stand, they are no different from any cadre-based or para-military organisations.

RSS cadres salute the saffron flag.

Religious conservatism, however, still seems to permeate through Muslim organisations. While essentially the All-India Majlis-e-Mushawarat's programme remains Islamic, the genuine apprehensions that Muslims harbour as a minority are turned into the familiar Islam-in-danger theme. Even a leader like Syed Shahbuddin, who has the potential of providing a genuinely secular alternative to Muslims has to speak a communal language to enter the Majlis-e-Mushawarat. Consequently, the possibility of a leadership that would fight the conservative tradition, while also fighting for the rights of minority groups, remains absent.

In its absence, and with the growing threat from Hindu communal fronts, the possibility of a leadership that would accept the communal divide without itself being self-consciously communal is remote. Leadership that accepts the communal issue either does so with the intention of perpetuating it or, as with Left parties, places the problems of religious minorities well below those of the peasantry or the urban proletariat.

We can begin to think of solutions to the communal problem only if a new attitude emerges, one that will overcome the strongly-entrenched conservatism of the last 200 years, and which will recognise this issue as being one of the most deeply-rooted means of social divisions practiced by our ruling classes.

From the Constitution of the R.S.S.

it was considered necessary to have an Organisation
A. to eradicate the fissiparous tendencies arising from diversities of sect, faith, caste, creed (etc.) among Hindus;
B. to make them realise the greatness of their past;
C. to inculcate among them a spirit of self-sacrifice and selfless devotion to the Hindu samaj;
D. to bring about all-round regeneration of the Hindu Samaj...

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Secular State, Communal Society



Despite the official secular programme of the nationalist movement, the dominant culture of nationalism remained Hindu. Thirty years after Independence the pattern continues and the Muslim still feels an outsider, says Imtiaz Ahmad.

Sketches by Mansur Badri

Communalism, wrote Thompson and Garratt, "is an old Indian problem that time does little to solve." Official statistics indicate that there are, on an average, more than one hundred communal clashes every year. (Last year the official figure was 400.) These repeated outbreaks of communal frenzy destroy more than just a few lives and property. The claim of the Hindus that India is a secular state, the hope of the Indian Muslims that they can live in peace and communal amity, and the conviction of progressive and liberal-minded intellectuals in the possibility of the emergence of a secular social order in India in the future, all suffer a serious blow.

To argue that the problem of communalism today is a creation of the communal parties alone amounts to granting them a kind of semi-divine role, or, at any rate, to making politics an autonomous power. If the communal parties are able to arouse communal feelings and tensions successfully, it is because the prevailing social climate is favourable for such a development. Even the so-called secular political parties and organisations including the Congress, are at present pursuing many policies and using electoral strategies which can be shown to have directly contributed to the intensification of communal tensions. One of the principal difficulties in the effort to explore the canvas of communalism arises from the somewhat exaggerated view of the Indian past among intellectuals and laymen alike who try to trace almost all aspects of human civilisation back to their ancient and rich cultural heritage. This tendency was strongest during the freedom movement. In those days the Indian past was glorified and elements which seemed to give the Europeans a sense of superiority, and consequently enabled them to justify their right to rule, were seen as existing in the Indian past.

One can easily understand the tendency among scholars to glorify the past during the freedom struggle. However, persistence of this tendency with respect to secularism, especially, has had somewhat unfortunate consequences. It has encouraged the belief among a large number of Indian intellectuals and public men that there already exists a sufficiently strong basis for the secular state, and



there is no special need to promote secular values in society.

The evidence of history does not support the view that secularism as embodied in the Indian constitution is derived from ancient Indian traditions, or that there is a pre-existing place for secularism in the Indian system of values. It is no doubt true that the state in ancient India was often tolerant of all religions, but the promotion of **dharma** was regarded as the foremost responsibility of the state.

Moreover, the system of justice in ancient India was founded on the principle of inequality. Special treatment meted out to religious minorities was dictated by considerations of commercial interests and political expediency, not a conscious acceptance of the principle that adherents of all religions were equal in the eyes of the state. In fact, religious minorities were protected and granted special rights but the rights enjoyed by them were not on a par with the majority of the population.

I emphasise the uniqueness and radical

nature of the decision by Indian leaders to make India a secular state for two main reasons. First, it serves to highlight the fact that there was no basis for secularism in ancient and medieval India. Second, it suggests that promotion of secularism called for unusual energy and efforts. It was required that certain tendencies which had dominated social and political life for centuries and had become particularly pronounced in the second half of the nineteenth century should be consciously and systematically curtailed and discouraged. In the course of our discussion I shall try to pinpoint some of these tendencies in somewhat greater detail.

In the historic past, Indians had not been seized with that spirit of nationalism which so radically changed the face of Europe in the nineteenth century. The principal reason for this was that the concept of nationalism itself was lacking in Indian thought. Bipin Chandra Pal echoed the feeling after a lifetime spent in politics: "Our language has, in fact no word corresponding to the English word 'nation' . . . And the reason is that our social synthesis stopped with the race idea. We never had, therefore, this nationalist sentiment before."

This traditional absence of patriotism or national feeling had important consequences for future political developments. When the nationalist sentiments began to germinate in the minds of Indian leaders in the latter half of the nineteenth century, these were driven to develop the nationalist doctrine from scratch, so to speak, since Indian history could not provide any adequate framework upon which a theory of nationalism could be erected. The concept of nationalism was therefore improvised with the assimilation of certain deities from the Hindu pantheon. Symbolised by the figures of Hindu goddesses Durga, Vani and Lakshmi, India was deified as the Mother to whom her children owed the highest loyalty.

Such a view of nationalism could hardly be expected to appeal to the Muslim mind. The Muslims were adherents of a different religio-centric manner of life and they did not share the Hindu veneration of the country as Mother. It is

true that the Muslim community in India was formed gradually through absorption from Hinduism over the centuries, yet the two communities remained distinct with an emphasis on their separateness.

There is no doubt that Hindus and Muslims shared, and still share, many common cultural values and practices and that they were often bound together in close social and economic relationships. Cultural habits die hard. But it is not necessary that these common special practices should have made for a lasting homogeneity between the two communities.

As Louis Dumont has rightly suggested, the significance of the difference between Hindus and Muslims is generally missed because religion is not taken as constitutive of society. Moreover, a clear distinction is also not drawn between the various levels at which the religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims found its expression.



For a proper understanding of the differences between Hindus and Muslims, it is necessary to draw a distinction between the ideological and interactional levels and to consider the religion of the masses separately from that of the educated Hindus and Muslims. Ideologically, Hinduism and Islam are quite antithetical to each other. It is true that Islam in India adopted many elements which were quite foreign to it. On the one hand, the Muslims tolerated the infidels alive as a part of the socio-political system which they established in India, abolishing, from Akbar to Aurangzeb, the capitulation (jizya) tax on them. On the other hand, the Hindus accepted as rulers people who could be transformed into Kshatriyas as they denied the supremacy of the Brahmins and theoretically at least, the validity of caste distinctions. But this co-existence produced no general ideological synthesis. Islam refused to be completely fused into Hinduism, although

it adopted several elements from it. Hinduism ossified itself in self-defence; the Hindu social system put itself on the defensive after the Muslim conquest and tightened itself more than ever before. Although there were movements and individual efforts at harmony, synthesis and even composite development, the two religions remained widely separated.



SANSKRITISATION

The links were perhaps strongest at the base of the social system and the two communities touched one another in positive ways. Edward C Dimock, Jr. has shown, using literary evidence from the Muslim Vaishnava poets of Bengal, that Hindus and Muslims shared pastoral and other festivals, and the similarities of devotional sufi doctrines to those of Hindu bhakti made it but a short step from one religion to another. On the other hand, the educated or otherwise culturally sophisticated members of the two communities recognised differences between themselves and operated in different social orbits. For instance, the middle-class Hindu, especially of the twice-born status, was never quite comfortable with his Muslim neighbours whom he regarded as rude in their manners and unclean in their customs. The Muslim on his side did not forget that he had conquered India, and he was apt to assert an importance which only irritated and annoyed the Hindus. He was also unable to conceal his contempt for the Hindu as an idolator.

It needs to be emphasised here that the distinction between those who accepted the absolute requirements of the faith and those whose behaviour was guided by the custom of the village rather than by the precise prescriptions of Islamic law was not absolute.

An individual whose religious belief was compounded of elements of animism and

magic and mysticism as well as the teaching of the Prophet could be, and frequently was, transformed into a relatively orthodox Muslim. It is essential to appreciate this dynamic character of the categories, since because of it people who merely shared common cultural elements were unable to develop any special sense of identity. It tended to encourage the development of a consciousness of community, although the conflict of interest among the social strata within the community was often acute and occasionally came to the surface. Whenever conflict arose between the communities, it tended to be posed in terms other than of cultural similarity and to run along the cleavage which was most sharply defined in the social structure, namely, religion.

Certain cultural processes tended to sharpen the differences between the two communities and to contribute to the development of community feeling among them. For want of better words I use the terms 'Sanskritisation' and 'Islamisation' to refer to the processes operating among Hindus and Muslims respectively. Sanskritisation refers to a process by which the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and the pantheon of orthodox Hinduism spread to low Hindu castes and outlying groups.



ISLAMISATION

The parallel process among the Muslims was Islamisation. It involves the spread of the customs, ideology and practices of the orthodox Muslims belonging to the upper strata of the Muslim society. When a Hindu group was converted to Islam, it was immediately pushed out by the Hindu social system. It no doubt continued to perform certain socio-economic functions for the Hindu castes but the degree of its contact was restricted, especially so far as commensality was concerned. Moreover, the convert group realised that its status within the Muslim community depended upon

its distance from Hindu castes. As a result, it soon discarded the un-Islamic practices which formed part of its general life-style, adopted a new name designed to connote a better social status, and advance a claim to have descended from one of the nobleborn (ashraf) families of Arabic or Persian origins.

It may be objected that I am advocating what is commonly known as the 'two-nation theory'. There is no doubt that lasting heterogeneity between Hindus and Muslims was emphasised as one of the cardinal points of that theory. Its proponent, the Muslim League, used this lasting heterogeneity between the two communities as a justification for its claim to be the sole representative of the Muslims and to support its demand for a separate homeland for Muslims.

Most historical studies in Pakistan insist that the creation of Pakistan was a logical development of Indian history, since Muslims remained a separate nation despite the efforts toward cultural synthesis between Islam and Hinduism.

This trend in Pakistani historical writings has its counterpart in India. The principal concern of many Indian historians seems to be to counteract the Muslims League's two-nation theory and to provide a historical basis for modern India's choice of secularism as a goal of national policy. One consequence of this tendency among Indian historians has been that the viewpoint holding that Indian culture is composite in character has come to be regarded as the only truly nationalist point of view. Anyone who stresses the lasting heterogeneity between Hindus and Muslims is usually branded as a communalist and a supporter of the Muslim League's two-nation theory.

The standpoint taken here is that the case of arguing that Hindus and Muslims remained separate despite mutual interaction is historically sound. It is undoubtedly true that Indian culture has imbibed a number of different cultural streams over the centuries. From time immemorial India has attracted peoples of different cultures, religions and races and the interaction among them, whether military or peaceful, helped to create a culture which would have to be regarded

as syncretic. However, the dominant strain of this culture was always Hinduism, and, to the extent that Indian civilisation remained an amorphous entity, other cultural streams were only partially integrated into the national culture.

It should be recognised that religious differences between Hindus and Muslims did not make Pakistan inevitable. On the contrary, it was the subsequent development of Indian politics which made the idea of Pakistan emotionally appealing to the Muslims. The Muslims were slow to respond to Western education and there was far less intellectual ferment among them. When they did take to Western education nearly fifty years later, they found that the whole idea of nationalism was deeply embedded in orthodox Hinduism. As with the Hindus, therefore, their nationalism took the form of Muslim nationalism, looking back to Islamic traditions and culture, and fearful of losing those because of the reassertion of orthodox Hinduism.

Some secular-minded leaders in the Congress were disturbed by the development of two parallel nationalisms in India and they tried to broaden the concept of Indian nationalism to include both Hindus and Muslims. In a series of writings beginning with the "Glimpses of World History," Jawaharlal Nehru tried to show that the Hindu-Muslim schism in Indian life was a superficial phenomenon. India, he postulated, was a unity in which people of different races, cultures and religious outlooks had intermingled to constitute a composite national culture. As Michael Brecher has noted: "Nehru was not alone in this view, but his influence gave it special weight in the party".

The impact of the secular leadership of the Congress was confined to the intellectual level, however. On the popular level the leadership of the Congress after the death of Tilak upto the time of Partition remained in the hands of Gandhi. Gandhi's religious background was the popular Vaishnava tradition which provided him with an intimate knowledge of the legends and symbolisms of the religious folk heroes of India. Until his advent on the political scene, the national movement as represen-

ted by the Congress was restricted to the Western-educated elite who had no mass base. Gandhi was quick to realise that a political movement could not succeed without mass support, and he directed his energies to carrying the political movement to the masses.

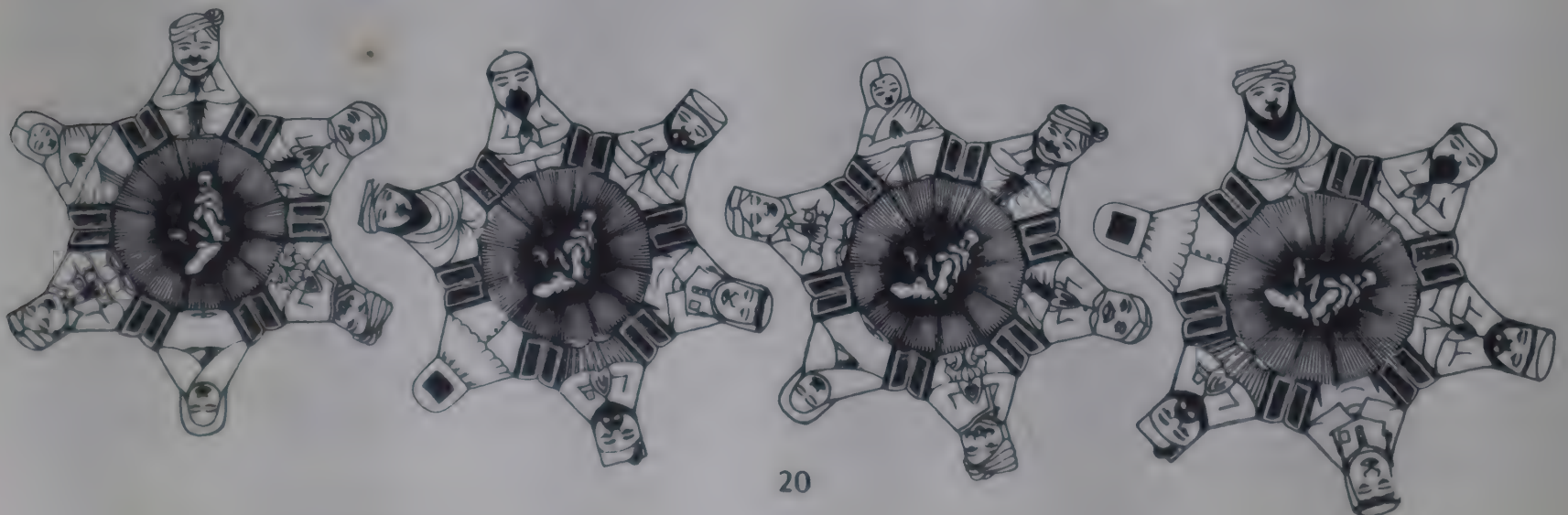
It is difficult to say whether Gandhi wanted to appeal to the masses of all religious persuasions or, first and foremost, to the Hindu peasantry and, only secondarily, the non-Hindu communities. It can be shown, however, that Gandhi took the Indian masses into groups and tried to enlist their support for the national movement separately, making an appeal to each group on an issue which was likely to have some emotional appeal for it, and at a time which appeared suitable for his purpose. He made a directly emotional and religious appeal to the Hindu masses from the beginning, and, when the occasion presented itself, tried to enlist the support of the Muslims on the Khilafat issue. In any case, to carry the political movement to the countryside, Gandhi expressed himself in a Hindu idiom. The prevailing public attitude toward Gandhi is one of reverence. This mitigates a critical assessment of his political strategy and the place of religion in his political philosophy. Louis Dumont has suggested that Gandhi's objective was two-fold: to attain independence and to consolidate Hinduism. In order to attain both ends it was necessary to show the beginning to reform. But reform was subordinate to independence.

Gandhi's approach to politics brought him in direct conflict with the secular leaders in the Congress. These leaders were vexed by the increasing part played by religion in organised politics. Men like Nehru and Bose found Gandhi's

political tactics somewhat ideologically frustrating, though they were unable to make a clear break with him for reasons of political expediency. (Bose, of course, parted company with Gandhi subsequently.)

This created a duality of character in the Congress organisation. On the level of principles, it claimed to be a truly secular organisation, refusing to take into consideration the religious differences found in Indian society and presenting itself as a representative of the nation. On the level of fact, on the other hand, it tended, or at least appeared to the Muslims, to be a predominantly Hindu organisation, identifying in the first place the Indian nation with the high-caste Hindu.

It is not my intention to suggest here that Gandhi was a communalist. In fact, his religious faith was different from that of the earlier extremists like Tilak, and while his approach to politics was basically traditionalistic, he broadened the nationalism of the Congress to include the Muslims. It is nevertheless evident that Gandhi's efforts to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity made little sense to a majority of the Muslims. His use of the religious terminology of Hinduism alienated the majority of Muslims. They felt that his primary sympathies lay with the dominant majority community and were unwilling to accept his leadership. They continued to rally under the banner of the Muslim League. It should, however, be emphasised that the Muslim image of Gandhi underwent a radical change in the mid-forties when the Mahatma travelled across the country protecting Muslims against communal frenzy. But this change in the Muslim image was far too late: the seed of communal discord had already grown into a large shady tree and was bearing bitter fruit.





It is often difficult for politicians to control the forces which they themselves set in motion. Gandhi had taken the Indian masses in groups and tried to incorporate them into the national movement in their own right, hoping that they would be able to share power together. On the other hand, the leadership of the Muslim League, not to speak of their communal parties, failed to see how the inherently Hindu character of the Congress organisation could make for a peaceful and fair political co-existence. They exploited the Muslim alienation which Gandhi's political tactics had accentuated, and used the combined Muslim support for political bargaining. All this had already sharpened the Hindu-Muslim friction. The partition of the Indian sub-continent and the large-scale movement of population across the borders gave an impetus to the social animosities between the two communities. There was mass killing on both sides and communal tensions mounted to a point which is rare, though not unknown, in human history.

The creation of Pakistan brought the Indian Muslims face to face with a difficult problem. When Pakistan came into existence, some of the areas where the movement for a 'separate homeland for Muslims' was most popular remained in India. The Muslims living in those areas naturally had to make a choice between staying on in India or migrating to the country they had fought to establish.

There were many practical difficulties which stood in the way of a clear-cut choice. Many of the Indian Muslims were in government or private jobs and leaving for Pakistan could involve loss of the advantage of seniority, provident fund and pension. The main source of income for the upper and upper-middle class Muslim in North India had been jagirdari and zamindari; if these Muslims left for Pakistan they were liable to lose their title to the land. In this situation, the choice of a large number of Muslims was made on the basis of pragmatic considerations.

In India, the Muslims were not faced with the same kind of threat to personal security and material assets as were the Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab, or, at least, not to the same extent. In West Punjab, as Prakash Tandon's autobiography shows, the Hindus and Sikhs wanted to stay on, but it was the political situation which forced them to flee. In India, on the other hand, the presence of a secular leadership, more significantly Nehru, gave the Muslims assurance that their lives and personal property could be protected. The Muslims living in areas which were not directly affected by communal riots largely stayed on even though many of them were involved with the idea of Pakistan. It may be mentioned that the decision of a large number of Muslims to continue to stay in India after partition was reinforced by a vague idea which many of them entertained at the time, namely, that India and Pakistan shall not remain separ-

ate states for a long time; they will rather form a confederation in which the interest of the community shall be safeguarded but there will be free movement of individuals from one part of the country to another.

The continued presence of the Muslims in India was, however, a source of irritation for the majority of Hindus. Hindu antagonism and hatred towards the Muslims who stayed in India were so strong within the first few months of Partition that one would not have been surprised if India has emerged as a Hindu state. It is well-known that certain elements within the Congress were favourable to the idea of India becoming a theocracy. However, there were other factors which were not quite favourable to such a development. For one thing, the leadership of the Congress and the country had passed, by this time, into the hands of leaders who were intellectually and emotionally committed to the idea of secularism. Second, India's declaration of becoming a theocracy would have seriously damaged the image of the Congress. Third, the assassination of Gandhi created a favourable climate for the acceptance of the concept of a secular state. Finally, the attainment of Independence infused the Hindus with a novel sense of power and, in the wave of liberalism which often comes with the acquisition of such power, they committed themselves to the idea of a secular state as a concession to the Muslims. Many orthodox Hindus entertained the belief after Independence that in accepting secularism they were making a gesture of goodwill towards Muslims for, as masters of India's destiny, they could as well make it a theocratic state. All these factors were not equally significant but they all contributed to the emergence of India as a secular state.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the most outstanding advocate of the secular state in India. For him, secularism was an important element in his total social philosophy, not simply an empty political slogan. It was Nehru's contention that communalism, a dismal aspect of Indian political life on the whole, was mainly a reflection of its backward economic organisation and stagnant social structure. Soon after Independence, Nehru initiated largescale programmes of economic development and social change and launched the country on the road to modernisation.

However, Nehru's forward-looking programmes were essentially the programmes of a small minority. A second class of opinion, with its roots spreading through all the main interest groups in the country, was the body of orthodox and traditionalist Hindu opinion. Its extreme expression was in the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Jana Sangh, but it had the sympathy of a large majority of Congressmen. This class of opinion was opposed to most of the programmes and policies advocated by Nehru. It disliked the efforts to raise the untouchables, to treat the Muslims as equal citizens in a predominantly Hindu India, and to extend the rights relating to inheritance and divorce to women. In short, it disliked the whole concept of a secular state.

Soon after Independence the traditionalist opinion called for formal recognition of Hinduism in the Indian Constitution and social directives of state policy. Sardar Patel vowed that he would not rest until the Somnath temple, partially destroyed during the Muslim invasion in the eleventh century, was reconstructed and restored to its old glory. Ramakrishna Dalmia launched a nation-wide campaign for the inclusion of a clause forbidding cow slaughter. K.M. Panikkar called for the revival of Sanskrit.

Of course, these revivalist demands were a natural outcome of the manner in which Indian nationalism had developed and the ideology which had provided substance to it. With the attainment of Independence, it was only natural that the demand should have been made that the state get rid of the cultural vestiges of alien rule and set about restoring the past greatness of traditional Indian culture.



HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA

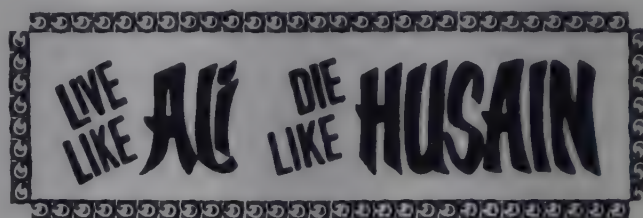
Nehru thus had to make important compromises with and concessions to orthodox opinion. For instance, Nehru hoped to pass the Hindu Code Bill in a single session of the Constituent Assembly. It took him nearly six years to pass the two important measures giving Hindu women equal rights with men in inheritance, succession and holding of property, establishing monogamy and providing for divorce. Moreover, the measures were processed piecemeal rather than as a single comprehensive enactment. There was a second limitation also. The Indian political leaders were divided into two major groups. The first contained the all-India politicians who had been mainly interested in the theoretical side of nationalism before Independence. The other group consisted of provincial leaders amongst whom commitment to the ideals of secularism and socialism was considerably diffused, varying in its form, character and intensity. Moreover, these provincial leaders retained their political influence through an articulation of various regional and local interests. Sometimes these interests ran counter to the ideals accepted at the all-India level. Thus, we find that, whether on the question of equal treatment of Muslims and other religious minorities, removal of untouchability or

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elimination of religious symbolisms from the state, the provincial leaders often went their own way.

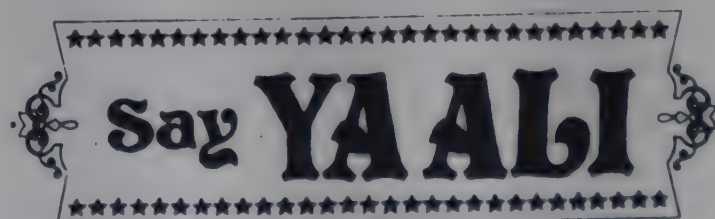
Within the Congress the trend toward the consolidation of traditionalist forces is reflected in the changing character of the leadership. The leaders who earlier advocated secularism, socialism and economic development have been either gradually pushed out of the Congress (or put in the background) or have voluntarily left the organisation. Their place has been taken

by the so-called political bosses who control the party machinery, organise factional politics and engineer the elections through their links with the cadre at the grassroots level. These leaders do not share the conviction of the earlier leaders nor are they afraid to lose anything if the programmes of secularisation, modernisation and economic development are abandoned. In fact, they have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo for the success of the programmes of economic development and social change may bring about significant changes in people's attitudes and values and thereby undermine the real bases of their power and influence.



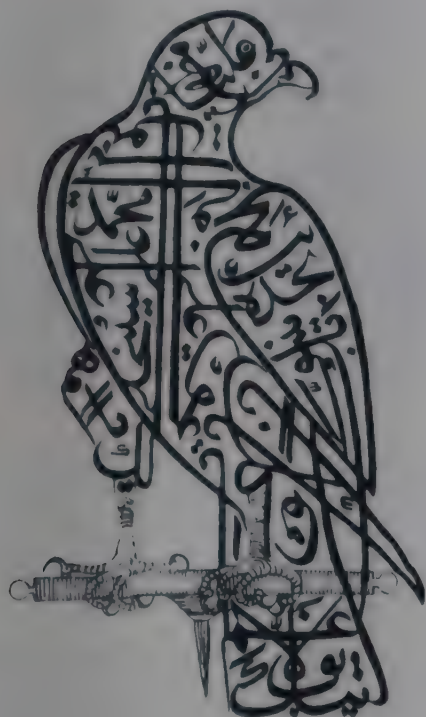
The consolidation of orthodox forces has been accompanied by an increase in the spread and revival of traditional values and a growing communal consciousness.

Srinivas rightly insists that the spread of traditional values, whether through films or All-India Radio or in popular books, brings about radical changes in the content of traditional culture. Indeed, from an academic point of view, it is possible to see the revival and revitalisation of traditional symbols and values in contemporary India as an aspect of modernisation. However, for a variety of reasons we can still characterise the spread of traditional values a reassertion of orthodox Hinduism. For one thing, the content of Sanskritic values, symbols and mythologies retains its religious and moral character and does not undergo secularisation in the course of their



spread through mass media or school textbooks. For instance, "Ramayana" and "Mahabharata" were seen as a source of Hindu religion, not as literary classics, and there is no attempt to undelfy their

heroes, Ram and Krishna. In fact, any attempt to undelfy the characters of the epics is considered "futile and positively mischievous". Second, these values are frequently characterised as a part of the cultural heritage of all Indians, not only of the adherents of Hinduism. Finally, and this is a significant consideration, the revival of traditional culture is viewed by the majority of Hindus as a symbol of Hindu resurgence and dominance.



Paradoxically, while on the one hand the democratisation of the Indian social system has revived the role of the traditional groupings based on caste, sectarian and regional or linguistic identity, increased Sanskritisation has brought about the consolidation of the Hindus as a religious community on the other. Some people are often inclined to believe that the two types of communal consciousness (those of the traditional grouping and the religious community) are similar in character and tend to neutralise one another. What is generally forgotten by the proponents of this view is that they are situationally determined and operate at different levels of segmentation. Broadly speaking, the identity of the traditional grouping based on caste or sect is effective only so long as the conflict or competition is confined within the religious community. When, on the other hand, competition involves two or more religious communities, the internal cleavages within each community usually merge together to form the wider religious community and consequently it is the

religious identity that assumes greater prominence.

The two wars in which India became involved during the last decade contributed a great deal to the intensification of communal consciousness and the consolidation of the traditionalist forces in the country. On both occasions the upsurge of nationalism had strong undertones of Hinduism. Particularly during the Indo-Pakistan war the whole concept of patriotism was deeply embedded within Hinduism. It speaks a great deal about the nature of Indian society that during the final phase of the war the entire propaganda machinery of the government of India had to be directed towards projecting an image of Indian Muslims as loyal citizens and rescuing them from a possible onslaught of Hindu communal violence.

The process of adjustment to the post-Partition situation produced two different political tendencies among Indian Muslims. Some Muslims isolated themselves from the mainstream of national political life and turned to the world of religious preoccupations. They were encouraged in this by some Muslim religious or semi-political organisations, such as the All-India Tablighi Jamaat and the All-India Jamaat-i-Islami, which had come into existence shortly before Partition and whose members had offered support for the creation of Pakistan.

The Tablighi Jamaat put its emphasis on strengthening the observance of religion among Muslims as it believed that the decline of the Muslim community in India was a result of its having lost touch with the cardinal principles of the faith. It sent out deputations of missionaries from place to place to sustain and strengthen the believers in the practice of their religion. The Jamaat-i-Islami, on the other hand, believed that a true Muslim society could exist only in a country where the government was in the hands of the Muslims and it was carried out according to Islamic principles. It advised the Muslims that India was a **dar-ul-harb** and the Muslims should refrain from taking part in its political structure until political power was restored to the Muslims.

For obvious reasons, the movement represented by the Jamaat-i-Islami could not

be very popular. It's theory that it was possible in India to have a Muslim majority and to establish an Islamic state was quite fantastic. In India, where the Muslims constituted hardly more than ten percent of the total population, there was obviously no scope for the development of an Islamic state. But its political and social separatism with its roots extending to the movement for religious puritanism which had been influencing Muslim thought since Sheikh Waliullah attracted many people.

The majority of Indian Muslims were quick to see that too effective a participation in the political process would arouse the hostility of the Hindus and withdrawal from it would reinforce their charge that the Muslims were keeping themselves aloof from the mainstream of national life. So, led by Muslim leaders in the Congress and the All-India Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind which alone among the Muslim organisations had some influence in the community after Partition, the Indian Muslims extended their political support to the Congress Party. Between 1952 and 1962 the Muslims usually stood behind the Congress, supporting the candidates put up by the Congress and electing Muslim candidates largely on Congress party tickets. Among the Muslims elected to the Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures, those belonging to the Congress constituted the vast majority in the first three elections.

It would be a mistake to assume that the Muslim support for the Congress was based on a conscious realisation that political integration was the most desirable course open to the community from the viewpoint of the future development of Indian polity. It was based on pragmatic considerations: the community saw in the Congress a political umbrella which could offer it protection against Hindu communal forces and safeguard its political interests.

In the elections, Muslim candidates were often granted nominations to run for elective offices. It is true that such nominations were generally motivated by considerations of electoral strategy; they nevertheless increased Muslim representation in elected bodies. Indeed, the number of Muslims elected to the Lok Sabha during the first two elections was in excess of their proportion in the total

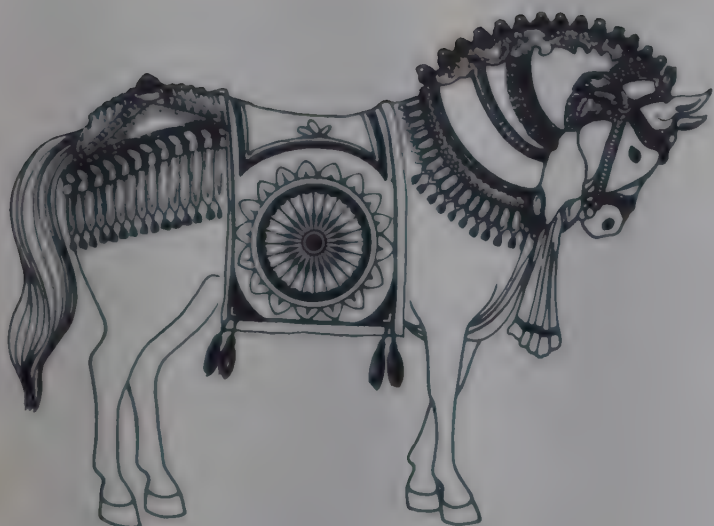
population in the country. However, this enlargement of political representation produced little change in the mood of the community.

The sense of frustration arose from two main reasons. First, the great majority of Muslims believed themselves to be discriminated against, especially from an economic point-of-view. The All-India Muslim Convention held at Aligarh in 1953, expressed grave concern at and dissatisfaction with the Central Government's policies towards their community. More recently, Ansar Harvani claimed that, "After two decades of Independence, the Muslims hardly find any place in the economic structure of the Indian society. They have almost no place either in the corporate or public sector, and feel that they are being reduced to be the hewers of wood and drawers of water."

It is difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty whether in fact there is any discrimination against Muslims in the matter of jobs, or it is merely a fiction of their mind, a reflection of their fear of persecution in a predominantly Hindu India that they are subject to continuous economic discrimination. Nevertheless, in a society where communal consciousness is sharply developed and the outlook of the people is clouded by a communal world-view, it would be wrong to assume that communal biases do not enter in recruitment at least at certain levels of Government and private jobs.

But of course the important thing is not that there is discrimination against Muslims in the economic structure. What is important is that Muslims have felt so insecure as to believe themselves to be the target of continuous economic discrimination. The fact of their belief has been crucial in their social adjustment in the country.

The second reason which contributed to the sense of insecurity and apprehension in the minds of the Indian Muslims was a belief that the Hindu majority was trying to break down their cultural identity and to deprive them of their religious and cultural symbols. It is sufficient here to state that the spread of Sanskritic cultural values and symbols through school text-books and mass media, the attempt to project these values as the values of all



Indians, the repeated utterances of some traditionalist leaders suggesting that Muslims must accept Hindu values and discard Arabic and Persian names in order to become acceptable in the Indian state of the future, the diffusion of non-Islamic elements in some of the Muslim institutions, such as the Aligarh Muslim University, which they regard as symbols of their cultural heritage in India (especially since diffusion of non-Hindu elements in Hindu institutions has been seriously resisted), the threat of reform of Muslim Personal Law and the decline of their language are some of the factors that have contributed to their sense of insecurity and to their belief that their cultural heritage is threatened by the resurgence of Hindu culture. All these factors are not equally relevant. Nor are the Muslims justified in feeling threatened by all of them.

But the fear of submergence arising from the treatment meted out to Urdu or the spread of Sanskrit symbols would not be altogether imaginary. Urdu has been eliminated from schools throughout vast areas of northern and central India. Indeed, as W.C. Smith wrote in 1953, the conclusion is inescapable that "The (Indian Muslim) community is in danger of being deprived of its language, than which only religious faith is a deeper possession. Nine years of gradual adjustment in other fields have brought no improvement in this, and little prospect of improvement".

It is a matter of common knowledge that when a religious minority feels seriously threatened, the machinery of its faith begins to wear out and its traditions begin to falter against those of the majority, it turns worriedly in

upon itself and its members cling even more intensely to the faltering traditions. That something like this has happened in the case of the Indian Muslim seems quite certain. Studies of religious change in some parts of the country where Muslims are found in substantial numbers show that the social and political developments in the country have precipitated a renewal of interest in religion among the Muslims and given rise to revival movements.

These changes are not confirmed to the rural areas. My research among Muslims in Uttar Pradesh shows that similar changes are taking place in the urban areas also. In all large towns and cities in the State the number of traditional Muslim schools has increased over the last two decades (even though the population of Muslims was somewhat reduced after Partition) and there is a tendency among the Muslims to send their children to these schools. Moreover, Muslim festivals and ceremonies are celebrated with greater pomp and show.



Meanwhile, the death of Nehru whom the Muslims had considered a shield and protector and the erosion of the Congress umbrella has encouraged a tendency towards political consolidation among them. The most direct evidence of this is to be found in the emergence of the All-India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat as a fairly influential political force in North India. It shows that Muslims are trying to consolidate themselves in Indian political life so as to be able to influence the political process directly.

Whether consolidation on the basis of religious identity is likely to prove detrimental to the secularisation of Indian society is a debatable question

and cannot be discussed here. Beteille has recently argued that: "The growth of 'communal consciousness' need not be viewed as necessarily an unhealthy or disruptive force. It may, on the contrary, be a pre-condition for the integration of a minority group into the wider body politic. For the measure of integration lies not so much in the passive acceptance of the status-quo as in the adoption of a body of common political rules through which divergent interests are organised and articulated. Thus what has been viewed by some as an increase in communal consciousness may be only a step forward in the politicisation of Indian society."



However, the revival of traditional Islamic culture and the political consolidation of the Indian Muslim community has been seen by many as an expression of Muslim separatism and militancy.

Separatist or militant politics requires a special legal framework for its operation. It generally operates in a political framework wherein two or more parties can vie with one another for political favours from a superior arbiter. Until Independence, the presence of the British created a political system in which both Hindus and Muslims sought to appropriate as many advantages for themselves as they could bargain for. However, since Independence the political balance of power has undergone a significant change, and the politico-legal system does not provide an operative framework for separatist or militant politics: there is no superior arbiter and the Muslims in the country have had to reconcile themselves to the fact that they could no longer assert themselves without the risk of arousing the hostility of the majority community.

This is not to suggest that Muslims are free from blame for the heightened communal feelings and tensions in India today. It is necessary to realise, nevertheless, that Muslim communalism does not any longer enjoy a favourable legal framework for its operation, and has consequently been ren-

dered ineffective, although it has not died out any more than Hindu communalism.

Moreover, Muslims are not the only group which has consolidated itself in order to influence the political process. Even a casual look at the political developments which have been taking place over the last two decades will show that political consolidation has taken place at almost all levels of Indian society, and social groups based on different kinds of communal loyalties have tried to use their combined strength to influence the political process. Political scientists have commented on the democratic reincarnation of caste for a long time. In addition, regional and linguistic groups all over India have been consolidating themselves during the last decade to count for more in political life.

In a way the process of cultural and political consolidation among the Indian Muslims is a reversal of an earlier trend toward the integration of the community into the national body politic. That the reversal has been influenced by the consolidation of the traditionalist and communalist forces within the Hindu community is almost certain. In any multi-ethnic society the burden of promoting the secularisation of the political system rests largely, though not exclusively, within the dominant majority community, because it alone is in a position to take a comprehensive view of the social and political process and to create a favourable atmosphere for the promotion of secular values. Indeed, the actions and attitudes of the Hindus are of crucial importance at present, because Muslim attitudes are still reactions to the pattern of Hindu politics rather than independent initiatives.



In India, the state is committed to the ideology of secularism. The Indian constitution guarantees equality of opportunity to everyone without the distinctions of race, religion and creed. Moreover,



religious or other kinds of minorities have been provided with special safeguards to protect their interests. It is now increasingly becoming obvious, however, that these constitutional guarantees and protective measures have not worked well in practice because those responsible for controlling the machinery of the state have often allowed their attitudes and values to influence the administrative and political process.

It is obvious that a distinction can be meaningfully drawn between secular society and secular state. Society is wider than the state in its operation. In a society where the outlook of the people is dominated by communalism the state usually cannot function for a long time on secular lines because the prevailing social tendencies, sooner or later, find their expression in the policies of the state. On the other hand, when a society is organised on secular principles or respect for secularism as a social ideology is diffused throughout the society, the state is generally likely to function on secular lines.

In India the state has remained committed to secularism but the widely diffused communalism and the highly-strung atmosphere of the country has made it impossible for the secular values and ideals to be realised. The champions of the ideology of secularism were conscious that the constitutional declaration of India as a secular state was not likely to be particularly meaningful unless the basic orientations of society were radically altered.

In recent years, unfortunately, the programmes which could help create a secular society have been gradually discarded or slowed down. It has been commonly assumed that so long as the constitutional provisions are not altered there is no cause to worry. In my opinion the only guarantee for the constitutional provisions to be translated in practice is that a consolidated and continuous effort should be undertaken to create a society in which mutual respect and freedom of opportunity can be given actual shape. And it is to the task of creating such a society that the political leadership should address itself in the future.

Then And Now

The changing nature of communal riots



The Ahmedabad riots of 1969 marked a watershed in the history of Hindu-Muslim rioting. Since the early seventies, says Asghar Ali Engineer in conversation with "Factsheet", larger and more complex economic and political forces have shaped communal riots.

The view that the pattern of communal riots has been changing lately is, in my opinion, a valid one. Since the late sixties new and important factors that have some bearing on this pattern have emerged. Communal riots, or for that matter even caste riots, have been integrally related to the process of uneven development within the country. They are basically caused by a rightist reaction to certain trends, or even what are called "threats" posed by the Muslim community, that have emerged in the course of India's political and economic development.

In the Sixties

The 1969 Ahmedabad riots represent a watershed so far as changes in the trend go. This was the first major riot that took place on a purely political issue. At that time, Mrs. Gandhi had just forced the split in the Congress and, in order to legitimise her new government and give it some popular support, she took some apparently socialist steps like nationalising banks and abolishing privy purses. The rightist parties were naturally alarmed and they tried to create a detrimental and embarrassing situation which, they hoped, would stem the new direction the country was taking. They thus combined to engineer the Ahmedabad riots.

Even the Reddy Commission report established that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the then Jana Sangh and the Congress (O) were responsible for the riots. Mr. Hitendra Desai, then Chief Minister of Gujarat, had cast his lot

with Mr. Morarji Desai and the Congress (O) during the split in the party. He, therefore, remained a silent spectator to the riots as they spread to other towns in Gujarat. The violence and killing that followed embarrassed Mrs. Gandhi's government a great deal.

Around that time, elsewhere in the country too, a reaction to economic and political developments was seen as emerging.

After the impact of the green revolution began to be felt in various regions of the country, there was a major reaction from conservative elements who feared changes in the status quo. In Tamil Nadu, for instance, forty-five Harijans were burnt to death in 1967, not in normal caste violence, but as a direct reaction to their being organised by the Communist Party of India.

Major communal riots had also broken out in 1970 in Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Bombay with the emergence of the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena itself bred on the economic crisis that emerged after 1965, when a large number of people were unemployed and labour became militant. The industrial bourgeoisie and the ruling classes in Bombay prevented the formation of any proletarian solidarity by encouraging the growth of regional chauvinistic sentiments. Maharashtrians living in the working class areas of Bombay were fed with the belief that they were being deprived of jobs because South Indians were monopolising them. They therefore joined the Shiv Sena in large numbers and became increasingly militant and restive.

In Bhiwandi, the Shiv Sena campaign took a more expressedly communal turn as was evident when it tried to capture the Bhiwandi municipality, which is one of the richest in the region. Revenue comes mainly from the large number of trucks on the Bombay-Agra Road that pass through the town, as well as from the powerloom industry there. Chauvinistic speeches made by the Shiv Sena leaders like Bal Thackeray were directed against the Muslims, who constituted close to 50% of the total population there. They appealed to the communal sentiments of the Hindus in order to get them to vote en bloc. This eventually led to the communal holocaust.

The Pattern Today

The communal riots of the late sixties set a trend in which economic and political issues predominated as causative factors, even though these were disguised under the garb of communalism. If we look at the more recent riots in Aligarh, Jamshedpur, Moradabad, Meerut, Bhiwandi, Biharsharif and Malegaon we find that they occur in places which share certain characteristics. These towns are usually middle-sized with a population of between two-to-five lakhs; they have a relatively high proportion of Muslims, anywhere between 20 to 50 per cent; and there is also a section of the Muslim community which is becoming economically active either in peripheral business or in the underworld.

It is in fact this last factor — the rise of a Muslim segment in a small town — that has created a lot of problems.

Firstly, this is seen as a political threat, plainly in numerical terms, which can influence electoral politics, as in Meerut.

Secondly, the rise of some sections of Muslim traders and artisans is viewed as an economic threat posed by the Muslim community to Hindu trading classes.

Thirdly, the presence of a large number of Muslims in urban peripheral business creates fertile ground for the development of a lumpen proletariat which is swollen by the mass of those Muslims who find themselves unemployed in small towns. This trend is most visible in Jamshedpur and Baroda.

Let us see how these factors work.

Politics and Voting Patterns

Till the early sixties, minority communities were seen as vote banks and there was a set pattern of voting. Political parties, particularly the ruling Congress, wooed minority community candidates who exercised influence, to ensure favourable poll results. Meerut is a classic example of this pattern. It has a large Muslim population which is influenced by a small section of well-to-do-Muslims. Therefore, Meerut provides a better chance to return Muslim Congress-I candidates.

With economic development and a growing political consciousness, minority votes can no longer be taken for granted. One can, therefore, discern a chain of tensions arising from the tug-of-war between different political parties who vie for minority votes. As in the caste riots of Bihar, where Thakurs, who no longer can dictate voting, react by unleashing violence on the Harijans, so also chauvinist Hindu elements especially the Jana Sangh and the RSS resent any voting pattern that works against them, particularly with respect to Muslim candidatures.

Recent examples of this phenomenon can be seen in Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Kerala. For example in Andhra Pradesh, the Muslims voted for the Telegu Desam in a big way and were as responsible as any other section for electing the Telugu Desam government. But in Hyderabad, particularly in the old city, the Muslims voted for the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin. This was strongly resented by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The tension that arose out of this situation was finally vented in a riot.



In Assam, too, one finds that over 3000 Muslims were killed in the violence that broke out in protest against the declaration of elections to the state assembly. What was essentially an anti-Bengali movement has now acquired anti-Muslim characteristics with the increasing infiltration of the RSS into the ranks of the AASU, particularly at the district levels.

In Kerala, despite the presence of the Muslim League, there was no communal riot till the Tellichery incidents in the early seventies, when the RSS began to establish itself there. Since then, the politics of coalition governments has aggravated the situation. The League demanded the price of supporting a coalition government by asking for reservations for Muslims in educational institutions etc. or for forming a Muslim majority district in Mallapuram. This was resented by the Nair community, which now encouraged the RSS branches to be opened in Kerala. The RSS began to attack the CPI(M) which was the main political rival both of the RSS and the Nairs. The Nairs are also political competitors of the Muslim League. Now the Kerala Congress, a Christian dominated party, is also asserting itself to win some demands as a price for supporting the coalition. Thus a very complex pattern of communal politics has emerged in Kerala, a state considered free of the communal canker so far, thanks to the electoral politics of coalition governments. And even worse, the left parties have also to play the caste-community game when they participate in the ballot system. This results in sharpening communal tensions and results in riots, like the recent one in Trivandrum.

Rising Economic Strength of Muslims

A section of Muslims, especially those in semi-urban towns which have a large Muslim population, have started demanding and taking a share of the economic cake.

These Muslims enter into peripheral business (not in industry and finance) or even illegal trade as they have limited alternatives. There have been a few traditional Muslim trading communities who have benefitted from the growth of commerce, but these are small and still do not belong to the traditional feudal culture that largely dominates. Once such

communities achieve a measure of affluence they tend to spend more on religious festivals, mosques, madararasas, etc., as these are ways of acquiring legitimacy in the community. This has caused a strong sense of resentment among the Hindus and the tensions such factors create often explode over the issue of loudspeakers, route of religious procession etc. which have been the cause of many riots.

A typical example of such economic rivalry is evident in the Moradabad brassware industry in which Muslims had mainly been workers and artisans. When H.N. Bahuguna was chief minister of U.P. he set up a brassware corporation which gave facilities to brassware workers and enabled them to form cooperatives. Some workers even began their own establishments and became prosperous. This was perceived as a threat by the Punjabi businessmen who claimed that 50% of this brassware business had been taken over by the Muslims, while the actual share did not really exceed over 10-12%. What was purely competition in trade generated anti-Muslim feeling and this finally formed the background of the communal riot.

Lumpen Involvement

With economic development and industrialisation in these middle-sized towns, the number of lumpen elements increases. With no jobs, they fall easy prey to communal chauvinism. Some even join criminal gangs which can be used for a variety of purposes including provoking the outbreak of riots — communal or otherwise. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh particularly, feudal landlords rely on these gangs to supply weapons and oppress Harijans. The triangle is completed by politicians who shelter such criminals in return for votes which may be harnessed by force. The Jamshedpur riot showed how this triangle can engineer a communal riot.

Another example of lumpen involvement is Baroda. The clash was originally between two gangs of bootleggers. On the one side you had a couple of Muslim gangs who monopolised the trade. On the other, was the Kahar community which took up this business after 1977. Finally, the Kahars came to predominate this illicit trade through political patronage and support from the police. So much so that when the

riots broke out, the administrative machinery, which is equally entangled in bootlegging, identified itself with the Hindus, and the Muslims suffered consequently.

Then and Now

An analysis of communalism in the late sixties and an outline of its current characteristics supports the thesis that it is a highly complex outgrowth of the process of socio-political change. This is again an integral part of, and has been based on, a process of economic development which has resulted in an iniquitous distribution of material resources. Such a process sharpens a sense of identity in different ethnic, caste and religious groups since they have to compete with each other for scarce resources in a slowly developing economy. The higher caste and upper class groups, on the one hand, and dominant ethnic or religious groups on the other hand, invariably succeed in monopolising income and employment opportunities. This aggravates social tension and inter-communal conflicts, which prevent the emergence of consciousness based on class affiliation. In fact, there are instances of castes and communities identifying with what may even be counter-productive in the long run. Class solidarity is thus substituted by a retrograde caste and communal solidarity.

Seen in this perspective, communal and caste violence appears to be a modern, social phenomenon prevalent in a bourgeois under-developed society. It is not a feudal hangover as is often maintained. At best one can say that some of the existing feudal structures are strategically utilised by the bourgeoisie in an underdeveloped economy.

The March of Time

Fundamentally, the issues that divide Hindus and Muslims have kept pace with our history. For instance, earlier, an atmosphere of hostility was mainly caused by the demands and counter-demands for reservations, which were forwarded by the Muslim League and disputed by other parties. Today, these have been pushed to the periphery by more recent political and economic problems. But what has not changed is that these issues have always been given a religious garb. Which is why,

till today, the spark that lights the tinder-box of Hindu-Muslim tension is often inconsequential. However, one must note that the overtones given to a larger conflict were greater in an earlier period than they are today.

At that time, there was the feeling of one community dominating the other because of religious supremacy. This was an outcome of the Muslim invasion and the subsequent proselytization that followed. Obviously the fear lingers on because even today, we find that the Meenakshipuram conversion of a few Harijans who had embraced Islam because they wanted to avenge their oppression by the higher castes, has been systematically propagated by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (a front organisation of the RSS) as evidence that foreign money (originating from the pan-Islamic Gulf) is being brought into the country to increase the number of Muslims in India, possibly to turn India Islamic.

Another major change has been witnessed in the role of the administration which largely seems to be taking sides with the dominant group today. This is because since Independence, the administration and the law and order machinery has mainly been filled with people from the majority community. We all know about the excesses perpetrated in Meerut by the PAC jawans who killed and looted mostly the innocent Muslims.

Earlier, I do not think that the police force was so openly partisan. In pre-Independence India, the police was under foreign control and was, therefore, not so easily influenced by local sentiment. A cold, calculated "divide and rule" policy existed but this was within bounds so far as law and order enforcement was concerned. Even in the immediate period after Independence some of the early nationalist spirit and feudal morality had checked the growth of the degrading corruption and partisanship that has come out into the open today.

Conservative and Rightist Forces:

The conservative and rightist forces have turned dangerous mainly in North India, where at one stage there was a Muslim ruling elite. With the coming in of the British, the Hindus started acquiring some political clout. In the beginning



this was convenient for the British who encouraged the growth of this group. But when this Hindu middle class and intelligentsia became the forum for the expression of nationalism, the help of the other community was sought. The creation of elected bodies based on limited franchise and the question of reservation or proportional representation became the major base for the thriving of communal ideologies and forces. At that time and in those circumstances, groups and parties that based themselves on such limited programmes found large support and this led to the emergence of the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and the Jamaat-e-Islami. Today, however, these groups are marginalised and do not have popular support.

The RSS, for instance, does not strike a sympathetic cord among the majority of Hindus. Its base is mainly limited to petty bourgeois elements from middle and small towns and its ideology chiefly appeals to conservative Hindu petty trading sections. Which is why the BJP is not able to get clear majority anywhere. It is only a secular party, be it the Congress or Janata that can win at the hustings.

Muslim leadership too is bankrupt. The most popular "leader" who has emerged in recent times is the Imam of Jama Masjid who is totally ignorant of even the reasons why the Emergency was declared or for the rise and fall of the Janata Party. Even more avowedly secular Muslim leaders in the Congress-I do not command a large Muslim following since they are seen as opportunists. Even the Jamiat-ul-Ulema has been thoroughly exposed through its factional fights. Being so distant from the masses, the demands of the Muslim leaders have not changed over the last thirty years.

Despite the fact that both the RSS as well as Muslim communal groups represent retrograde political and social tendencies, one finds that the RSS is more aggressive and dangerous.

This is because the RSS has been trying to fight for maintaining the political and economic status quo under a garb of tackling religio-social problems. This is a 'reaction' to recent politico-economic developments in which some lower-strata Muslims are making more money and gaining political clout. This is why I would call the RSS and other Hindu chauvinist forums 'rightist' as against the Muslim forums whom I would term as conservative since their interest is to preserve the religio-social status quo. This is because orthodox Muslim forums will loose their hold on the Muslim masses if they are progressive and demand changes in Muslim personal law and endorse assimilation into the national mainstream, if there is one at all.

Therefore, even the role of the Jamaat-i-Islami, which is the most rabid political force among the Muslims is, in a communal riot, not offensive. At the most, it might rave and rant about upholding the Muslim personal law or the Islamic character of the Aligarh Muslim University. These expressions are often interpreted by rightist Hindus into certain myths: Muslims do not want to practice family planning and change their laws, they want to keep four wives and breed like rabbits to increase their numbers and so forth.⁹



After the Riots

Pointers from Meerut

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL
326, V Main, 1 Block
Koramangala
Bangalore-560034
India



Riot-prone Meerut is a pretty accurate microcosmic representation of what happens in areas where communal forces operate, says Rajiv Tiwari after visiting that city following the riots in September 1982.

In Meerut, the communal riot was the result of a gradual coalescence of several eddies, currents and streams of discord that kept growing in force, unchecked. When they fused together, the impact shook the country. Of course, in general terms this explana-

tion suffices for virtually every riot that breaks out but, in its specifics, the Meerut riot stands revealed as starkly communal, unlike Baroda where the communal situation was aided and abetted by the several criminal and political factors with which it has been associated. In the case of the latter, then, post-riot analyses have confined themselves chiefly to the rivalry between Hindu and Muslim bootleggers which escalated and acquired the greater dimensions of a communal riot. In a way, this is also a comfortable and sometimes convenient manner of refusing to accept the existence of communal determinants — we would rather deny their existence.

Undoubtedly, Meerut too has had its fair share of political and criminal discords that could well find communal channels of expression but the riots themselves ultimately broke out over a question which was quintessentially communal : a disputed property. A Hindu claims that it was a temple. A Muslim claims that it was the grave of a seer.

How did this primarily local dispute, confined to one area (Shahgasa) in Meerut, stoke the passions of a whole city resulting in at least 31 deaths, rioting for one week, untold losses to the khaddar and scissors cottage industry in Meerut and a three month long period of unemployment for nearly 50,000 workers ?

Of course, once the riots broke, the news hit the headlines of every newspaper and magazine, as a result of which the whole country was subjected to communal fragmentation. The Hindus believed that the Muslims deserved what they got, they had it coming in any case. The Muslims on their part added one more chapter to the annals of their grievous history. Ultimately, the riot no longer makes news any more, it has been digested and assimilated but the passions that left Meerut in flames have not yet been sublimated.

Growing Malaise

When a communal riot breaks out it brings to light a darker side of the country's history, it forces you to recognise the malaise that has gripped the country for the better half of a century, it compels you to reject the easy talk of national integration and development.

In the absence of a secular temper within Indian society, which is known to be fragmented into kinship, caste and religious groups, and because of the peculiar nature of its democratic evolution, the terrain becomes extremely productive for obscurantist and revivalist forces to exploit the friction that a riot yields.

Thus the Hindus hurtle themselves back over the time-span into the glorious Vedic ages, living out idle fantasies of the nature of Ram rajya. The Muslims delve into their own tenets, declare that India is dar-ul-harb, a heretical country living out of the pale of the

Islamic code. The retreat into these well-worn shells ensures a collision that detracts and debars an understanding of the communal problem as it really exists today.

In one destructive flash then, a communal riot reveals the peculiar dynamic of outdated ideological forms being imposed totally out of their contexts onto a modern-day situation, thus making a mockery of the country's secular aspirations. The twisted logic that then prevails brings into its orbit certain sections of both communities who may subscribe to a particular viewpoint partially or in toto.

If we proceed along lines like this, it raises certain basic questions about the positions of classes, castes and communities in India today. It allows us to try and identify how communal forces operate, what is the social base for such operations, who is closely associated with the recent spurt in communal riots and of course, why.

Meerut does not answer all these questions, it only gives certain pointers which may coincide with or even contradict evidence that has emerged from other well-known riot-prone areas. Certainly, however, the situation in Meerut is a pretty accurate microcosmic representation of a larger country-wide model.

First, a general backdrop to the specific situation in Meerut. The city's population is severed virtually halfway by the Hindu-Muslim dividing line; with 48 per cent of its residents being Muslim. Meerut also represents the western extreme of the Muslim belt in Uttar Pradesh and has been fortunate in its economic development. Perhaps because of its proximity to Delhi it has witnessed a steady ingress of improverished landless labour, mainly Muslim, converging from areas as far as western Bihar, through Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Sultanpur, Rai Bareilly, etc. Politically, therefore, the situation is alarming for any Hindu politician and this is borne out by the fact that apart from the brief Janata interregnum, Meerut has always returned Muslim Congress-I MPs and MLAs.

Economically, the khaddar and scissors industry in Meerut is at an almost primi-

tive stage of development, mainly restricted to small Dickensian workshops where the working class is predominantly Muslim. Trade of the produce is however in the hands of the Hindu banias, and the situation automatically lends itself easily to communal exploitation.

Lately however, the primarily artisan-like nature of Muslim participation in the city's economy has been undergoing changes - a few Muslim weavers have finally turned entrepreneurial. A similar process has been witnessed in the growth of iron foundries, furniture manufacture and lathe operations, apart from the growth that some Muslims have registered as garage mechanics and even owners of big brass bands which accompany every **baaraat**.

So far as the Hindu trading castes are concerned, the economic growth witnessed amongst a few Muslim families represents a direct economic threat to them, apart from aggravating their fears that this recent prosperity is indeed only a direct reflection of the large-scale pumping of Gulf money into Muslim hands for a pan-Islamic resurgence.



Undoubtedly, there are reasons to believe that the appropriation of wealth in Muslim hands sometimes fuels an aggression which the community lacked earlier without a sound economic base. But such a phenomenon is really evident only in Baroda, not in Meerut.

Simplistic Conclusion

Considering the political domination of Meerut by the Muslim community, it is remarkably simple to conclude that the new-found economic wealth has resulted in an insolent show of Muslim superiority, ergo the riots were engineered by the Muslims. This conclusion, however, has to be tempered with the obvious consideration that the prosperity among Muslims is extremely restricted and confined, as opposed to the general level of affluence among the Hindus. Which is not to say that there are no deprived Hindus in Meerut. Rather, there are many more underprivileged Muslims than poor Hindus in the city.

Which brings us to a point where it is important to delineate the social stratifications as they exist in Meerut and to try and dovetail this into the resurgence of religious revivalism. While the Muslim community is easily divided into Shia-Sunni blocks (the former represent the more prosperous elements in the community) and is further fragmented along religio-political, doctrinal forums varying in their positions vis-a-vis the Indian nation (the spectrum encompasses the Congress-I at one secular extreme and the Jamaat-e-Islami at the fundamentalist extreme) a surprising development is materialising among the Hindus.

The new Hindu ethic, as it is emerging, is surprisingly tolerant in its outlook towards the backward and scheduled castes who had hitherto been outside the mainstream of Brahmanical revivalism. The exigencies of the political situation have, however, forced the adoption of a more eclectic and populist doctrine. Therefore, you can witness the co-option of the scheduled caste Bhois and the Kahars into the mainstream of Hindu revivalism in Baroda. Likewise, in Meerut too, the Valmikis (a euphemism for the word Harijan) have now come to find shelter under the broad Hindu umbrella. In one breath, a high-caste Hindu will utter words like **bhangi** and **chamar** and

in the same breath he will talk of their protection. For the Valmikis, Bhois and Kahars this acceptance represents a turning-point in the history of their communities and presents a concrete possibility for upward mobility.

Thus, the dominant myth of a monolithic community standing in opposition to a fragmented Hindu populace needs to be revised if we are to come to terms with the recent communal developments. The case of Meerut and Baroda bears out the alarming proposition that the scheduled castes have emerged as a third force that is actively willing to assert itself in a communal situation and is in numerous instances a willing tool in the hands of upper-caste Hindus.

Most often, the scheduled castes are perfectly amenable to enter into violent conflicts and the sociological reality of Muslims living in close proximity to the scheduled castes eminently suits the designs of Hindu communal forces.

Police Intervention

In fact, once the riots broke in Meerut, of the 60 areas put under curfew not one was a predominantly Hindu area. Police firings and looting were confined to the extremely poor quarters of Meerut, which are shared between the scheduled castes and the Muslims. Surprisingly, then, of an estimated 100 deaths (police figures account for only 31, in the case of the rest the deaths are indeterminate since the bodies were never recovered) only eight Hindus were killed. This fact lends credence to the allegations made by some Muslim leaders that the so-called communal riot was neither communal nor was it a riot, in the sense that Hindus and Muslims did not clash violently and kill each other. It is said that the Meerut riot was simply a police action where the police interceded to "protect" the Hindus.

Some details may be necessary to shed light on this issue. Coincidentally, during the period of tension in Meerut, the city commissioner, R.D. Sonkar, the district magistrate, Shambhu Nath, and the Superintendent of Police, Pyarelal, were all scheduled caste appointees (Khatik Harijan, Pasi Harijan, and Jatar Harijan, respectively). It might seem shameful to recount these lurid details of caste groups but when these

facts are examined in a particular context they make sense. Without necessarily raising the bogey of a conspiracy, it is reasonable to assume that the scheduled castes no doubt gained confidence from the fact that the three most senior government officials in Meerut were from their community. So far as the upper-class Hindus are concerned it is plausible that they figured that here was one more positive advantage to be gained from the involvement of the scheduled castes.

Tota Ram Kane, a Valmiki sports goods seller in Meerut, offered an interesting hypothesis for the recent bonds that have been welded between Hindus and the scheduled castes. He said that the Meenakshipuram conversions represent a hiatus between the conventionally fractitious relations between the Hindus and the Harijans. According to him, the conversions brought to a halt the anti-reservation movement in Gujarat since the Hindus realised that the results of such a struggle might ultimately lead to conversions on a mass scale, with disastrous implications for the future of Hindu nationalism.

What is important to note in Kane's deposition is his frames of reference and his attitude towards the communal issue. In this case then, as in most communal perspectives, it is not as important to cross-check whether the end of the reservation riots in Gujarat did actually coincide with the conversions at Meenakshipuram. Rather, Kane's assertion hints at the perception of a reality which can be easily misrepresented if it travels through the prism of ingrained biases.

Later, Ram Asre, another Valmiki, added that the Muslim-Harijan schism emerged after Moradabad where the Muslims suspected the Harijans of driving in the pigs towards the Idgah. The antipathy displayed by the Muslims and the Harijans towards each other since then has been successfully exploited by Hindu communal forces. In a larger political perspective, this falling out might signal the end of the Congress-I's vote banks since the polarisation towards Hindu-Muslim divides the party without either of its established bases.

To get back to the question of attitudes once again: in Meerut it was extremely difficult for me to recognise the aggressive thrust of Muslim revivalism that I had been told to look out for. There seemed no obvious display of the untold wealth that is supposed to be pouring in from Islamic nations. All that I encountered in the Muslim areas were bullet marks, looted homes and a hunted look on the faces of men and women as they recounted their desperation.

Of course, there are any number of people who will convince themselves that the pathos I witnessed was contrived. But was all of it lies? Was I to believe the truth, the real truth, as revealed to me by V.S. Vinod, editor of an unabashedly communal rag called "Dainik Prabhat"? This paper as well as "Meerut Samachar" played particularly inflammatory roles in the stoking of Hindu passions by publishing stories which even the Hindus find difficult to relate with any conviction. Here's a sample: On the night of the riot, a red light was lit at the Idgah. That was the signal for the Muslims. They attacked 29 areas at a time. And yes, I must add on my own that these well-armed, fierce Muslim mobs managed to kill only eight Hindus over a period of seven days. So much for the story.

In fact, it was in the Hindu areas of Meerut that I noticed garish portraits of Vir Mangal Pandey, garlanded with fresh flowers, gun in hand. It was in the main street of Shahgasa that I saw freshly-painted temples, with their characteristic red flags bravely waving with a trident stuck close by. It was, in fact, in Shahgasa, near the place of dispute, that I met Devander Goyal, Surendra and Sushil Rastogi, the trio that stood up for the Hindus and shot into prominence following the riots. It was while I was sitting with them, in fact, that I got a glimpse of what everyday communalism is all about.

The time: one p.m. or thereabouts.
The place: Devander Goyal's Shiv Shakti Mandal in Shahgasa, base for his tantrik operations. Devander retreats into his sanctum sanctorum and suddenly around us the air begins resounding

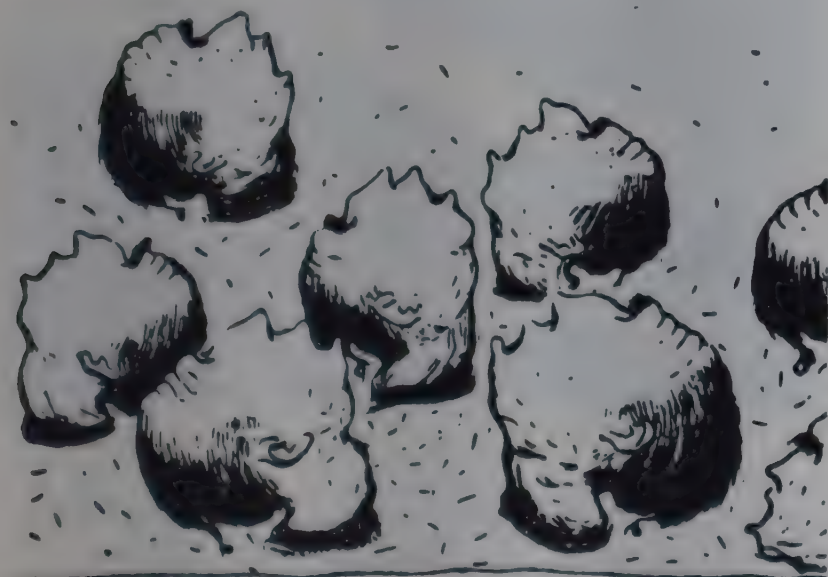


with the sound of temple bells and conches. At the back of my mind I remember being told by the Muslims that this kind of "puja" is purposely coincided with the azaan, the mullas call to the faithful. But this is not even a puja, I realise, as I note mechanical distortions in the sound. This is a tape being played over an amplifier. And, it is time for the afternoon namaaz. I ask Surendra Rastogi how far the Jama Masjid is from here. A hundred and fifty paces, he answers. I rush down the steps and am twenty paces gone when the volume of the amplifier is abruptly decreased. I ask a few of the Muslims around the mosque if this happens often. They reply, yes, everyday, every namaaz.

Inside Devander Goyal's so-called temple I noticed a huge hoarding proclaiming

the presence of a Shiva mandir, which was, I suspect, designed to be placed on the site of the disputed property. This is after the collector signed an order that the property is to be sealed and that it is neither a mandir nor a mazaar. But I figure the concerned Hindus know better.

The Hindu areas in Meerut, and Baroda too for that matter, have broken out into a rash of mitra mandals, often named after militant and powerful Hindu gods like Hanuman and Shiva. These mandals organise things like shobha yatra where they carry their deities in splendour, amidst aartis, blowing of conches and the ringing of bells. Mind you, these parades are taken through areas which are extremely tense, since often the main commercial road of an area belongs to the Hindu traders while the hinterlands are inhabited by the Muslims.



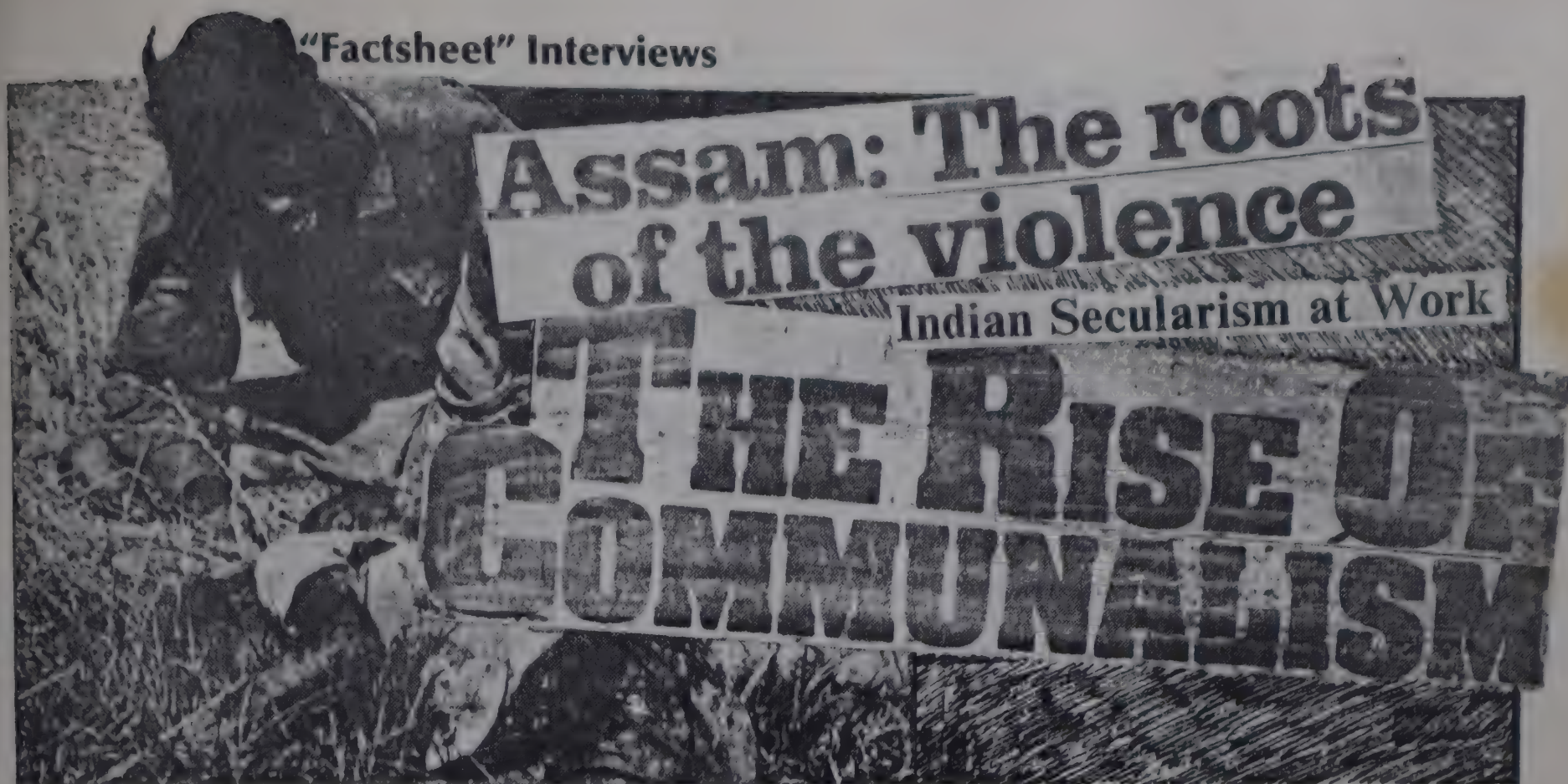
So what are we dealing with here? What do these patchy vignettes add up to so far as Meerut is concerned, Muslim or Hindu revivalism? What is more disconcerting about the latter is the pattern that can be traced between Baroda and Meerut: the rise of akhadas, the religious fervour of young boys

who participate in Hindu festivals, the portraits of Shivaji and Vir Mangal Pandey, the leadership of these activities by Hindu traders, the involvement of militant scheduled caste communities. Is all this to be taken as a spontaneous resurgence of Hinduism or is this being carefully engineered?

Curiously, for all the talk about the organised resurgence of Islam in India there is little to substantiate this claim, particularly in Meerut. The case of Baroda is, in this respect, different, since enough bootlegging money finds its way into the hands of lumpen Muslim elements. And yet, for all the talk of Gulf money pouring in, it seems strange that few of us are willing to publicise the well-known six-month funds collection drive organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad which netted at least Rs.200 crores. Meanwhile the establishment of an Islamic Studies Centre in Baroda involving Rs.60 lakhs has been touted as a piece de resistance in the evidence gathered to prove the ingress of Arab money and pan-Islamism in India.

Similarly, much has been made of Imam Bukhari's visits to Meerut. They were assiduously reported by the press as yet another instance of Muslim conspiracy. What has remained unreported is the day-to-day provocation of Muslims through the raising of slogans such as "Aadhar-miyon ka naash ho", "Shasan vidhan shastriya ho", "Bharat akhand ho," and "Gau hashi band ho." Also a number of instances of pig's meat being thrown into various mosques in Meerut have not been given much attention. The murder of Ram Bharose, the priest who was supposedly in charge of the so-called temple sparked off the riots. The strangulation of Imam Mazhar Ali of the Sarafa Bazaar mosque went unnoticed.

No one can seriously dispute that both Hindus and Muslims are responsible for the creation of communal tension. The dominant belief, however, is that all communal riots are engineered by the Muslims, they are the "culprits" they are the "miscreants." We are being forced into believing that the Hindus are merely the innocent, tolerant and silent sufferers of the communal canker.



"A Middle-Class Phenomenon"

— Bipan Chandra

Historian Bipan Chandra, author of the classic study on Indian nationalism, **Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India**, has been writing on communalism in India for a long time. His essay, "Historians of Modern India and Communalism", published in **Communalism and the Writing of Indian History**, is well-known as the chief exposition of the 'false-consciousness' school of interpretation. We publish below a Factsheet interview with Prof. Chandra.

On the nature of Muslim minorities and communal forces:

"First of all, I think that we should identify the particular nature of Muslim minorities in India which is different from that of other religious minorities like the Sikhs and the Christians. I don't think it is valid to speak of a majority community in India suppressing all minorities since the Sikhs and Christians are not suppressed, while the Muslims undeniably are. This is clearly seen in the issue of jobs. Earlier, during the sixties, discrimination was mainly evident only in governmental jobs but we can now see it in the business sector also.

"Since we are no longer placed in a

colonial situation, business opportunities have come to acquire greater importance than administrative ones and we have to note the terrible discrimination being practised against Muslims, particularly in North India.

"In such a situation communal forces inevitably do tend to come to the fore, but we must first recognise them clearly so that we know what we are dealing with. I think there is a tendency among secular parties, groups and individuals to see Hindu communalism as the main fascist threat. Therefore, they are critical of the spectre of Hindu chauvinism. This is correct, but we have to realise at the same time that Muslim communalism too has been quite powerful since the fifties and that its existence makes the struggle against Hindu communal forces that much more difficult. I feel that a struggle against Hindu communalism has to be accompanied by a struggle against Muslim and Sikh communalism also. Communalism in India is essentially a middle-class phenomenon, all those susceptible to middle-class ideologies fall prey to communal feelings. This category also includes segments of the urban population, including even the workers.

"One of the characteristic features of

communalism is that even though the Centre is secular, the states' machine-ries are full of quasi-communal elements. These elements might not be actively communal in ordinary circumstances but when it comes to a riot then all their latent communal sentiments are aroused. A major political and administrative effort has to be made to deal with such elements who are prevalent in the government."

On the nature of the Indian right-wing, and its role in communal uprisings:

"When speaking about right-wing support of communal forces, we must distinguish between the capitalist big bourgeoisie, which has been growing almost geometrically, and the kulak capitalist farmer who is today politically more active and militant.

"The latter, which had once supported the Congress, is now asserting itself through its own political forums like the Akali Dal and Telegu Desam; while Sharad Joshi is the most evident manifestation of their heightened economic aspirations. I feel that the capitalist class has by and large rallied behind Mrs. Gandhi but it is only when the entire middle-class of a region has grown alienated from the Congress, as it has happened in Assam, that communal forces find fertile ground and move in to exploit the situation.

"Our studies have indicated that the capitalist class has by and large never supported communalism. At best, they might be described as national-chauvinist. But I will certainly say that the sort of communalism we are experiencing today is not an expression of feudal forces. It is in fact connected with more contemporary forces, such as the growth of the petit-bourgeois classes.

"Assam is a classic example of what is happening in the country today. The petit-bourgeoisie has lost faith in the Congress and the left has completely failed to win it over. The situation is therefore in a total flux and not only the middle-class but even the peasantry is now feeling threatened. To my mind, the uprisings are not communally directed so far, rather they are against all those who are anti-movement, whether they are Bengali or Muslim. But they could turn communal if for instance they spill

over into Gauhati city and Muslims begin to get killed.

"I cannot yet see a definite political pattern of extreme right-wing activity emerging. At the most one can say, as in Assam, that the situation is in flux!"

On the possibility of secular leadership emerging:

"Whatever discrimination one might see today against Muslims, I don't think that this contravenes the basically secular character of our politics and polity. I think the nationalist movement was secular. We should always see communal forces as the containment of a move towards secularism.

"As I said earlier, communalism is essentially a middle-class phenomenon, and to that extent it should be distinguished from communal riots. And again, the sporadic riot should also be considered in a different light from communalism itself. I believe, for instance, that a genuinely secular leadership will not find it hard to contain a communal riot.

"Only simplistic Marxists would take the position that communalism is an instrument in the hands of the ruling class. Communalism is a modern ideology serving certain modern social interests. Just because religious issues are an integral part of communalism it is not enough to describe it as a remnant of feudalism, or even to see communalism solely as a religious issue. Such a viewpoint ignores the entire lesson of our history.

"One major mistake that has been systematically made has been to assume that, with the spread of education, communal biases will disappear. How can they disappear when much of our education is itself communal ?

"We must realise that communalism is mainly a petit-bourgeois phenomenon, that those who preach it are not our big bourgeoisie so much as the rich kulak class, and that communal expressions can often be seen mainly in people whom we would otherwise consider modern. Until we recognise these things, we will never really understand what we are fighting."

"No Dearth Of Communal Organisations" — Des Raj Goyal

Des Raj Goyal, editor of **Secular Democracy**, has since long been a vehement critic of religious revivalist organisations. His book, **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh**, published after the emergency, is one of the most comprehensive studies on the ideology and conduct of the RSS. He was interviewed in Delhi by **Factsheet**.

On the role of communalism in Indian society and politics:

"Communalism, as we see it today, is really a consequence of the freedom movement as it developed when the past had to be glorified and had to be integrated into the national mainstream. If today politics is based on exclusivist communal mobilisation or on a contractual integration of various communities, then we have to consider that the freedom movement itself has been responsible for this

"I would like to see communalism as the manifestation of various primordial sentiments: take for instance how neighbourhood groups, which at their extreme, lead to regionalism; kinship groups lead to casteism; and religious groups lead to communal uprisings. This is bound to happen in the absence of a vigorous scientific thrust in our society.

"Let us see how the present situation has come about. Right from the sixties there has been a major swing towards the right. In the 1967 election it was the right which asserted itself. Now, Mrs. Gandhi who had seemingly broken away from the right, after 1969 has never organised her party along secular lines. In the period following the Congress split, she gave the call and the nation responded to her populism but no one was clear as to how genuine social redistribution would take place under the new circumstances. For example, the nationalised banks were supposed to be instruments of structured change, but no one considered how they would prop up new sectors of development or how would they redistribute capital in an egalitarian manner. We therefore had a situation where increased bureaucratisation took place side by side with a capture of the state apparatus by an individual and not by an organisation.

"Now all the other parties are modelling themselves on Mrs. Gandhi's party, bearing top-heavy names and very little grassroots organisation. They are all urgently in search of a mass-media other than print which will enable them to reach out to the 'masses', without looking at social groups as other than consumers or voters. This is authoritarianism. It is a necessary backdrop to our understanding of communalism.

"As a result there has been a smoothening of definitions. Even the Bharatiya Janata Party, inspite of its basically communal motivation, is able to adopt a secular veneer. It faces no threat from the democratic process, in fact it is using this to propagate its own position.

"If today, communal issues are somehow seen as more realistic by certain sections than secular issues, there can be no other reason than that there is no force which is able to articulate the secular needs of the society, whereas there is no dearth of communal organisations".

On the RSS and allied organisations:

"For 50 years now the RSS has concentrated single-mindedly on developing a cadre that is hardworking, devoted, fanatical and impervious to outside thinking, and most of all, remarkably dynamic in implementing whatever plan is given to them. This cadre has issued out into society under the concept of the powerhouse — the headquarters and the substation — the **shakha**. There is no question of a political party like the BJP using the RSS; it is exactly the other way round.

"Along with the BJP, and its work among Harijans and tribals, the RSS has received feedback on the new requirements of the cadres. In the sixties and the early seventies, there was a tactical organisational shift where the maximum concentration was on building up student cadres — the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) — and trade union cadres too — the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). By the mid-seventies, this led to a situation where the **shakha** become less important and consequently the inflow of school children into the RSS was reduced. Therefore, from the late

seventies, we can see another campaign — setting up of schools, kindergarten classes and even nurseries. This has been seemingly spontaneous and not according to any plan, but the names usually are the same: Rashtriya Shiksha Samiti, Shishu Mandir, Geeta Shiksha Samiti and so on. In the Janata movement, all these came together under the generic name of Vidya Bharati.

"Their latest organisation, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, has to be seen in the light of the re-orientation that took place in their thinking during the Janata period. The VHP was formed in 1964, and was supported by Gulzarilal Nanda, then home minister. The areas they took up were in north-eastern India, Assam, Manipur etc, where they functioned in collaboration with the Ramakrishna Mission. Their main effort was to Hinduise the tribal areas and to integrate them into their areas of control.

"Today, one can see a dual role of the VHP — of injecting a communal orientation into political negotiation, which they began doing after the Janata period when the RSS realised that their days in power, and of actual field work as they have been doing in Assam, would not last.

"In Assam, they were in collaboration with Marwari tea-garden owners. The Marwaris, who have always had to justify their presence in Assam have always been at the receiving end of agitations, whether in the question of refineries, or the language issues etc. In 1978-79, there was a new wave of agitation, but this time the Marwaris were not at the receiving end at all. First it was anti-Bengali, which the RSS and the VHP have now successfully converted into anti-Muslim fury. Since 90% of the refugees that have come from East Pakistan have been Hindus, in 1978-79 the RSS gave a slogan distinguishing refugees, that is the Hindus, from the infiltrators who were obviously the Muslims. So now, after the election there, the violence has turned anti-Muslim, and the entire atmosphere has been communalised, which is exactly what the VHP always tries to do. This is, I think, a growing trend, and we must watch it carefully".

On communalism in the South:

"I think the RSS has grown tremendously

in Kerala. It has really thrived on the Muslim League there and on the Moplahs, who were supposed to be anti-Hindu.

"When Mallapuram district was made a separate district in the Malabar, and it was obviously a Muslim majority district, this was made much of as a 'gain' for Muslims although it was a purely administrative measure. Then in Kerala, the RSS captured the **devasthanam** movement (temple lands) of the Brahmins and the Nayars. These have been the ways the RSS has grown, particularly in Kerala.

"In Tamil Nadu, the attempts of the DMK towards an anti-Brahmin caste mobilisation came up against difficulties when the Brahmins made common cause with other upper castes. They have used issues like these, as also the fishermen's agitations in Kanyakumari, the anti-Christian feeling there, and the Meenakshipuram conversions last year. In short, wherever a communal situation has existed, the RSS has not been slow to take it up.

"They have had literally hundreds of conferences in the South — 'Hindu Ekata Sammelans' as they would call them. They have had about 100 in Karnataka itself in the last few years. The idea is to build small, almost autonomous organisations in every state, orient groups of 20-25 people properly and then leave them on their own".

On the possibility of a Muslim communal reaction:

"I certainly see a very assertive Muslim communalism emerging. Since the demand for a separate state is no longer possible, the demand has changed to one for reservations. The problems are that the communal Muslim section does not articulate Muslim aspirations in secular terms; all they really seek is a slice of the national cake for themselves.

"Till 1960, the Jamaat-i-Islami was almost dormant. Now, although it is numerically strong, it is a major component of Muslim communalism which exerts a very large influence on the community. One of the consequences has been that organisations competing for a following have been giving more and more communal slogans, and thus the influence of traditionally nationalist organisations like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema has reduced.

"The rise of an organisation like the Ittehadul Muslimeen in Hyderabad is interesting in this context. This is an out-and-out fascist organisation. It began with the support of the Nizam, and today glorifies the Adil Shahi dynasty. The classes who support it are either the old Nawabs, a decadent feudal order who are on the point of becoming some kind of lumpen, or poor Muslims who live in slums. The Ittehadul Muslimeen began the **Mulki-geir-mulki** (sons of the soil versus foreigners) when Hyderabad was made part of Andhra Pradesh, and today it has developed a complete hold on the old city through its programmes. No one fights them as a party. In 1978 they had an adjustment with the Congress (I), and now they had an understanding with the Telegu Desam.

"There is no movement at all really among Muslims for a secular orientation. Rather it is often the other way round. When someone like Syed Shahabuddin, who is basically a secular person, tries to reinstate himself within a communal thrust he is only leading Muslims into a blind alley.

"After Assam, Muslims have begun coming together. Mrs. Gandhi's role really seems to be that of a Hindu leader best prepared to extend protection to Muslims. She takes an organisation like the VHP under her umbrella, not overtly but by always staying away from dealing a mortal blow to communal forces. It is in this way that she keeps it alive while publicly condemning it".

"Secularism Here Is Really A Slogan"

— Mushirul Hasan

Mushirul Hasan, author of **Nationalism And Communal Politics**, has been one of the most significant contributors to the new understanding of communal politics that took place mainly among Muslim historians in the 1970s. His book highlighted the contradictory tensions that operated among even conservative Muslim sections during the controversial Khilafat period. It is within this framework that he analysed the role of the conservative Ulema and its relationship with the new urbanised educated Muslim leadership as well as with the Hindu nationalists led by Gandhi.

In the interview reproduced below, Hasan comments on contemporary Muslim problems. We reproduce his opinions, for though it may be difficult to reconcile them with his own writing on the pre-Independence period, they are nevertheless important in that they do represent the thinking of a large section of the Muslim intelligentsia.

On the crisis among Muslims following an increasingly militant right-wing Hindu activity in the country:

"I think that one must make a historical assessment of the present trends. In the pre-1947 period communalism had no

definite identifiable pattern, in the manner in which you can see one today. The new pattern is, firstly, centered around the emergence of a Muslim bourgeoisie, such as is being churned out every year by the Aligarh University, and secondly, around the powerful trading or artisan Muslim communities such as those in Ferozabad or Moradabad. The riots are usually against the increasing threat being felt from either these two sections, or as in the case of Poona, against both.

"One factor which is important but which is, perhaps, not demonstrable, is the growing confidence among Muslims in the past decade, a confidence linked to their economic position which has improved quite considerably in certain areas. This is in sharp contrast to the early days of our Independence. Where does this reflect itself? On one level, in educational activities. These may be the establishment of more and more **madarassas**, or a revival of educational interest in secular subjects which, I think, the contact with Arab countries has particularly encouraged.

"On another level, this is reflected in much greater political participation than

in the past, and the impact of this has been felt too. The realisation that Muslims in India can also vote, that they can decide upon their own future, has been an important one. They are, therefore, no longer voting en bloc for the Congress (I), they do affiliate themselves with the other political parties.

"The communal response to this is, therefore, from all those who feel threatened from Hindus who feel that Muslims are doing too well. The crisis is of this nature, emerging from those who do not permit Muslims their rightful share".

On whether he sees a likelihood of Muslim communal reaction as well:

"No, there has been no significant increase in Muslim communal reaction. The resurgence of Muslim fundamentalism is just talk which is entirely unsubstantiated. There is no Muslim leadership, and I feel there isn't going to be one—Shahabuddin is really peripheral.

"The Muslim leaders who have emerged, and who are in national politics, do play a significant role, but not in the communal sense at all. For instance, in Assam and Burdwan, Bihari immigrant workers in coal mines vote for the CPI(M). It is only in areas like Murshidabad, which is overwhelmingly Muslim, that they vote for the Congress (I). Secular Muslim leadership has increased, whereas communal leadership has been unable to make any headway at all. For example, the UP Muslim League, which is far more communal than its counterpart in Kerala, has made no headway at all.

"The Jamaat-i-Islami certainly exists and every new riot gives it a new lease of life. But we should not overestimate its significance, because communal leadership can never find sympathy with a majority of Muslims for the simple reason that they are all too apprehensive of a massive upsurge of reaction. In the 1960s, at least the psychological option was there among Muslims that you could go to Pakistan. Today that doesn't exist."

Given the undeniable discrimination in the question of government jobs and other opportunities, does he not feel the

possibility of neo-separatist movements at all ?

"The question of secularism is a complex thing. The unequal development that has taken place among various sections in India often does not permit Western models to be applied in the case of India. In any case, 'secularism' here is really a slogan, a constitutional obligation. You can't impose secularism from above.

"Nevertheless I do believe that the demands of the national movement were secular. It is for a variety of reasons that the unifying forces have not been successful in overcoming caste, regionalistic and chauvinistic barriers.

"No, there is nothing like a neo-separatism in India. Pakistani historians like I.H. Qureshi and Aziz Ahmed still cling on to the two-nation theory for obvious reasons, because Pakistan has to justify itself. But I can tell you that no Indian historian takes separatist positions."

On whether the events of the last two years, including the riots, and the Assam situation, will result in new theoretical positions:

"Well, we have to respond to reality. Why certain things do happen, or why they don't, are questions that may take years to answer. I feel that we may fall once more into the same trap as we did when everything was ascribed to 'false consciousness'.

"For many years Muslim historians were reluctant to talk about the present. Their work was at best on the medieval period. Today the thrust of the Aligarh school is basically a negation of a lot of positions that were taken in the past which still provide the fuel for revivalist positions. Golwalkar and Savarkar do provide a foundation for Hindu communalism even today, one that is reinforced by social reformism and movements like those of Dayanand Saraswati and Vivekananda. What was unfortunate was that there was no alternative framework to this for many years, and it is this framework that is in the process of being made today."



In The Name Of Islam

An analysis of Muslim communal organisations

The 'Islam' of a number of Muslim organisations is an ally of retrogressive politics in the country and protects the elitist nature of Muslim politics. Moin Shakir critically examines the history and role of the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Majlis-e-Mushawarat and the Muslim League.

The incidence of communal violence in the eighties is the most disturbing phenomenon of Indian politics. Equally disturbing is the inability of social scientists to understand communalism and communal organizations in a correct perspective. Both politicians and social scientists offer superficial explanations for the problem, arguing that communal organizations exist, because the people are religious-minded, backward and illiterate. Some assume that religion, particularly Islam, makes its followers anti-modern in thinking and separatist in politics. Sociologists assert that the

upward mobility of certain segments of a community generates conflict and therefore, they develop a vested interest in communalism and in organising themselves along communal lines. Such explanations conceal the reality rather than reveal it. What is generally ignored is the economic and political basis of communalism and a perspective which perceives it in the context of the Indian economy and the interests of the ruling class.

The so-called "socialist" and "secular" polity in India is based on communalism and communal groupings of the people. The

inbuilt communal tinge in the ideological make-up of the state managers and the ruling class is an inevitable aspect of class rule in the country. The reluctance on the part of the state managers to subscribe to a philosophy of rationalism, the basis of bourgeois rule in the capitalist world, a tendency to compromise with the feudal or the precapitalist social and ideological formations because of the awareness of the narrow base of the rule, and the imperatives to seek legitimacy make them dependent on the forces of primordial allegiances, not only in the majority community but also in all other communities.

The ruling class and the state managers perceive the Indian people in terms of different communities, castes and communal interests. The entire political system operates within a framework of aggregation and articulation of communal grievances and communal demands. This perception is an inalienable part of the ruling ideology in the country as it mystifies economic realities in the polity and helps the perpetuation of the hegemony of the dominant classes. This is one of the major reasons for the existence of communalism and communal groupings in the country.

Secondly, the ruling class has a major stake in the existence and working of communal organizations in different communities. These organizations divide the subalterns along religious and communal lines. However artificial the divisions may appear, they effectively impede the unity of the dominated classes whose political and economic interests are identical. The ruling class is mortally afraid of such unity as it constitutes the biggest threat to its rule. The class may pay lip service to secularism, but it has a vested interest in keeping the people divided. In order to maintain disunity, the ruling class has been making shrewd and cold-blooded calculations, often forgetting the costs of such ventures. Assam is a case in point. The root of the problem, underdevelopment, is ignored and a solution is sought by hardening divisions — Hindu against Muslim, the indigenous people against immigrant, the plainsman against the hill dweller, the tribal against the non-tribal, the caste Hindu against the Scheduled Caste Hindu (1).

Violence associated with simmering divisions strengthens communal feelings which are channelled through communal organizations. The standard strategy of the ruling class is to fight one form of communalism with the help of another, both at the inter-community and intra-community levels. Akali communalism with more extremist Sikh communalism or Jammāt-i-Islāmī communalism with Jamīatul-Ulema communalism are examples.

Thirdly, the existence of communal organizations promotes what is known as the 'Weberian' notion of politics which ensures the validity of the political and economic system. The system provides equal opportunity to everyone to have his or her share in it. For the assertion of their claims, the people organize and mobilise themselves on ethnic grounds. They are made to understand that power is not the domination of one class over another but is something which is shared by all. They are also assured that the state is not an instrument of the ruling class but a neutral body which acts as an umpire in the distribution of justice to one and all. The 'Weberian' notion of politics provides an ideal situation for the ruling class in which the fact of control and hegemony over the dominated classes can be concealed. Once this notion is accepted by the people, the idea of changing the system, or of bringing exploitation to an end or of doing away with inequality becomes irrelevant. Issues like ethnic identity, share in the spoils and representation in administration which are the concerns of the educated middle class become the central problems of 'politics'. Thus the politics of communalism and of communal organizations serves the interests of the middle classes and not of the people.

Fourthly, communal organizations, which are ultimately in consonance with the interests of the ruling class, find a conducive situation in which they can successfully function. The present nature of capitalist transformation of the Indian society is quite congenial to communalism and communal organizations. The retarded growth of capitalism and semi-feudal relations in agriculture negate the potential of forging unity of the people along secular lines. In fact there exists a material basis for pre-capitalist ideolo-

gies like communalism, obscurantism, revivalism and fundamentalism to thrive. Political organizations which are formed on these bases increase their effectivity by articulating the genuine demands of their groups like the secular demands of the Akali Dal or the Muslim organizations' stand on communal violence. In the given circumstances, therefore, the fact of communalism or communal organizations cannot be wished away.

In addition, the neo-rich, the professionals, commercial bourgeoisie, and the big landholding interests in different communities, including Muslims, find communal organizations useful for acquiring social respectability, political importance and greater economic facilities. The alliance of these groups with orthodox religious leadership pays dividends as it helps establishing rapport with the rural Muslim masses. Communal organizations gain immense legitimacy, owing to the compulsions of electoral politics; as every political party, right from the Communist parties to the B.J.P. seek their support at the time of elections. The ruling party also does not lag behind in cultivating some of the communal organizations in different communities.

There are a number of Muslim political groups and political organizations in the country. Some operate at the regional level like the Ittehadul Musalameen of Hyderabad, and some at the national level like the Jamaat-i-Islami or the Jamiatul-Ulema-e-Hind. Here we shall deal with only three Muslim organizations, the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Majlis-e-Mushawarat and the Muslim League.

The Jamaat-i-Islami (hereafter the Jamaat) was established in August 1941 by Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi (1903-1979) of Aurangabad. On his initiative 75 persons assembled at Lahore, among them the Ulema, university graduates, professionals and a few artisans. The objective of the Jamaat was the establishment of **Deen** (religion), which meant the revival of Islamic values and ideals in the life of the people. Implied in the objective was the rejection of socialism, democracy, nationalism and secularism. Maudoodi maintained that the Western notion of democracy, the Bolshevik revolution, fascist regimentation, and Turkey's deviation from Islam were not

satisfactory models. The only ideal state was an Islamic theocracy. Maudoodi opposed the Indian national Congress and the Muslim League's policies. He did not agree with the methods and the objectives of the national movement. But after partition, Maudoodi moved to Pakistan and indulged in the worst kind of opportunism there in the name of the **Quran** and **Hadith**. A separate Jamaat-i-Islami (Hind) was established in April 1948 with Maulana Abul Lais Islahi as its Ameer (chief).



The root causes of the ills of contemporary society according to the Jamaat are materialism and this-worldliness. The present social structure has no ethical foundations and what is needed is a religious revolution. Such a revolution can be brought about by the righteous Muslims who constitute the **Khair-e-Ummat** the chosen virtuous among the people. The Muslims, therefore, are not a community, a minority or a geographical entity but by superceding them are made into a party — the party of God, **Hizbullah**.

A society based on materialism produces a civilization which forcibly separates religion from the state and society. In the non-western world it has created a slavish mentality. The West and Western civilization have created the false gods of nationalism and democracy. Nationalism is nothing but national selfishness. It treats man not as a part of humanity but as a member of a particular country set against other countries. Maudoodi held that the freedom struggle, which was motivated by the philosophy of nationalism,

was not righteous because the Indian National Congress was politically Indian, ideologically communist and culturally Western.

Democracy is undesirable because it considers people as sovereign, while Islam maintains that God alone can be sovereign. Secondly, it believes in the existence of different political parties. Islamic polity can permit only one party. Besides adult franchise and political participation in democracy are not desirable. In the same way socialism was opposed as it abolishes private property and propagates atheism.

Against the background of the philosophy of the Jamaat, let us analyse its role in Indian politics. What Maudoodi said before the Court of Inquiry in Pakistan is quite relevant here.

Question: If we have this form of Islamic government here in Pakistan, will you permit Hindus to have their Constitution on the basis of their own religion ?



Answer: Certainly, I should have no objection even if the Muslims in India are treated in that form of Government as Shudras and malechhas and Manu's laws are applied to them, depriving them of all share in the government and the rights

of a citizen. In fact such a state of affairs already exists in India.

Question: What will be the duty of the Muslims in India in case of war between India and Pakistan ?

Answer: Their duty is obvious, and that is not to fight against Pakistan, or to anything injurious to the safety of Pakistan.

The Jamaat is a rigidly-organized and well-disciplined party. Though it is essentially composed of the middle class, lately it has made a successful bid to gain the support of different sections of Muslims especially students and women. Its influence should not be judged by its meagre membership. In 1967, it claimed to have 1,360 members; in 1974, 2,064; and in 1980, 2,833. The Jamaat disclaims large membership which might become "unwieldy and inchoate".

The Jamaat has a graded hierarchy in its membership structure; **Arkan** (adherants), **Ma'waneen** (supporters), **Muttafaqeen** (those who agree) and **Muttasirin** (those who are influenced). The strength of the **Muttafaqeen** is 1,232 and of the **Ma'waneen** is 36,272. The Jamaat had 13 regional organizational centres in Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, U.P., Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnatak, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The three centrally controlled areas are Delhi, Orissa and Andaman. In all, the Jamaat has 436 local units.

The Jamaat has 548 libraries and 388 reading rooms throughout the country. It runs 35 nursery schools, 355 schools, 36 junior high schools and 23 colleges. In addition, to this, the Jamaat publishes a vast amount of literature pertaining to Islam and **Hadith**, not only in English and Urdu, but also in different regional languages.

The Indian situation, according to the Jamaat, is characterized by immorality, dishonesty, corruption, inefficiency, in short, moral degeneration, which is caused by nationalism. They should not think in terms of their "national rights" and should give up the idea of pressurizing political parties because it will be of no benefit to them.

The Jamaat believes that the participation

of Muslims in the growth of secularism is "treachery to the Prophet". Islam cannot be separated from politics. Secularism is nothing but "irreligiousness". It is not an accident that the Jamaat is close to Hindu obscurantist organizations. In one statement, Maulana Abul Lais Islahi, the Jamaat chief, has said, "We do not deny the value and worth of some of the slogans of Hindu Mahasabha. For example, it is against secularism and supports the incorporation of the religious and ethical values in the political life of the people". The attitudes of the Jamaat towards the Arya Samaj and the RSS have been similar.

During the Emergency the leaders of the Jamaat and the RSS found that they could work together. According to Maulana Mohammad Yusuf, (then Chief of the Jamaat) "The physical proximity enabled them to understand each other's points of view; what was more, it started the normalisation of relations between different communities. This should be encouraged in order to improve the social climate in the country". Further the Maulana admitted that "the role of the RSS in the past could not have been to the liking of the Muslims. However, responsible leaders of the RSS are not now adopting a non-communal attitude".

One does not know the nature of the misunderstandings between the Jamaat and RSS leaders. On the basis of the writings of the leaders of both organizations it is not difficult to believe that a basis for unity between them already existed. Even before the Emergency, they could come together. Each considered the other the authentic representative of its community, anti-secularism and anti-communalism were common to both and both favoured the existence of separate religious-political organizations of the different communities.

In the political field, the Jamaat lays emphasis on three principles to be followed by Indian Muslims:

- i) Solidarity of the Muslims on the basis of Islam;
- ii) Withdrawal from political activities in the country; and
- iii) A separate political organization of the Muslims.

The Jamaat feels that solidarity based on Islam alone can be permanent and stable. It shall make the community strong enough to fight the enemies of God from within and from without. It shall constitute a force against the present system which denies the existence of God and life after death. It also means that Muslims should not join any other organizations and parties because it spells disorganization and disaster.



According to the philosophy of the Jamaat, Muslims should not participate in elections nor should they vote. Both amount to indulging in un-Islamic activity.

Maulana Abul Lais Islahi envisaged many practical difficulties in the Indian context. Muslim electoral candidates could not secure the votes of the Hindus, unless they sought the support of other political parties. But this was not possible because every Indian believes in the "one-nation theory". Such an alliance would not enable the Muslim representatives to act as protectors of the legitimate interests of the whole Muslim community. If one decided to follow the discipline of a political party, one ceased to be master of his own will.

The Jamaat also argued that the Hindus want to establish a Hindu state in keeping with the Vedas and the Dharmshastras. Once the Muslims become actual participants in the election politics of India they may be "irretrievably caught in the midst of party politics and may not remain as mindful of their religious duty towards their country as they ought to be". In the seventies, this stance of the Jamaat underwent a change. It accepted the utility of elections, maintaining that elections were

the best way to forge contact with people and create an impact on them. In 1972 it decided to take part in the panchayat elections as a first step towards participating in higher electoral bodies.

The Jamaat believes that as a religious community and an important political entity the Muslims should have a separate political organization. It has been working in this direction from the early fifties but succeeded only in the sixties. With the formation of the Majlis-e-Mushawarat, the Jamaat got a great opportunity to provide religious orientation to a number of issues in Muslim politics and operate as a strong pressure group. The Jamaat acted with a calculated strategy which had the desired results.

The failure of nationalist Muslim leadership was obvious. It was equally obvious that in a democracy, no minority could claim and enjoy an autonomous status. Therefore the policy of seeking "protection" and "safeguards" could not be very effective. The Jamaat offered the alternative that Muslims should accept the injunctions of Islam, wherein lay their salvation. Muslims were asked not to consider joint organizations of different communities. Moreover, the Jamaat advised the national secular parties not to approach the Muslim masses directly because Muslims who belonged to these parties were not "the representatives of the millat".



The Mushawarat was not a single organization of the Muslims. But the Jamaat leadership was quite enthusiastic about its formation and growth because it wanted to get a broader mass base and to use Muslim consolidation as a bargaining

counter with other political parties, like the Congress or the Jana Sangh.

The Jamaat's hold on the Muslims should be viewed with grave concern. It is giving birth to a combination of Islamic fundamentalism and uncompromising hostility to socialism and democracy. It is promoting an anti-historical consciousness and a pronounced reactionary socio-political and economic outlook in the Muslim community.

The formation of the Muslim Majlis-e-Mushwarat was an important development in the politics of the Muslim community. It signified the unity and consolidation of different political groups which were active at the regional and national level. It was an attempt, on the part of Muslim organizations, to assert themselves effectively and to influence national parties.

The Majlis-e-Mushawarat is a federation of various Muslim organizations and a representative of the various schools of thought and non-party Muslim dignitaries. It is composed of the Indian Union Muslim League, the Jamiatul-Ulema-e-Hind (Mufti Atiqur Rahman group); the Jamaat-i-Islami; the Tamir-e-Millat; the Itihad-ul-Muslameen; the Muslim Block (MP) and Muslim Majlis. Representation is also given to the Ahl-i-Hadith, the Shia community, and the Bareilvi School. Mashaiqs and other Muslim dignitaries are also represented.

The objectives of the Mushawarat are :

- (1) to enable Muslims to live in accordance with the lofty ideals of Islam and make them participate in the national life in a manner in keeping with their status of being the Khair-e-ummat;
- (2) to forge unity among all sections of the Muslims;
- (3) to make all efforts to eradicate communal and other petty prejudices and to promote an atmosphere of mutual amity and understanding;
- (4) to promote goodwill and integrity among different communities and groups in India, and to help the aggrieved and the oppressed;
- (5) to lend support to all attempts at retaining and promoting the secular character of the State;
- (6) to promote Muslims to unhesitatingly

contribute to the solution of various national problems.

The Mushawarat was established under the leadership of Dr. Syed Mahmud in 1964. In August 1964 he invited about 80 Muslim leaders, belonging to different schools of thought from all over the country to meet at Lucknow. The object was to discuss Muslim problems and difficulties. The delegates belonged to the Jamiatul-Ulema,



Jamaat-i-Islami, Muttaheda Mahaz, Dini Talimi Council, Congress Muslim League and other religious schools of thought.

The biggest factor responsible for the creation of the Mushawarat was the alarming incidence of communal riots in which the Muslims suffered most. Another reason was the subjection of Muslims to manifold injustices and prejudices on the cultural, political and economic planes. The Mushawarat wanted to seek the support of all parties including the Jan Sangh. It was hopeful of a change of heart even from the RSS chief Golwalkar. This strategy was opposed by a section of the Jamiatul-Ulema-Hind (Asad Madni group) which held that the Muslims need not have any common Muslim platform for the redressal of their grievances.

It is true that the Mushawarat evoked a favourable response from the Muslims. In July 1966, it issued a charter of demands on a nine-point manifesto :

1. Reform of the educational system;
 - a) moral education and discipline should form part of the curriculum.
 - b) history books should be revised.
 - c) books prescribed in schools should be genuinely secular.

2. The system of proportional representation should be adopted for elections to the legislative assemblies and parliament.
3. The fundamentals of the welfare state should be the guiding principles in formulating the internal policy of the country.
4. Personal Law of the different communities should not be interfered with by the state.
5. The mother-tongue should be the medium of instruction in schools. Urdu should have the status of the second official language in U.P., Bihar, Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore.
6. Minority boards should be established consisting of representatives enjoying their confidence to look after their interests.
7. The government should preserve and respect those aims and objects of an institution which its founders had in mind. The special character of such institutions as Aligarh Muslim University, Shantiniketan, should be maintained.
8. Religious trusts should be managed exclusively by members of their communities without any interference by the government.
9. Steps should be taken to reform society and vices such as untouchability, drinking, obscene literature should be prohibited. A country-wide campaign should be launched to eradicate nepotism and bribery.

The Mushawarat, however, did not set up any of its members as candidates. It exhorted the Muslims to vote in favour of any candidate who was free from religious bigotry or any other parochial or linguistic taint, and was known for honesty and integrity. The Muslims were advised to support those whose professions and performance were truly in accord with democracy and socialism and who subscribed to the tenets of the "Nine-Point People's Manifesto."

The Mushawarat did not take into account the party affiliation of the candidates which made all the difference. It held that elections were not its creed or objective. But taking into consideration the general mood of the people and their bitter experience under Congress rule, it

minds of the minorities and backward classes. The federation therefore aimed at safeguarding the legitimate rights of the weaker sections, achieving harmony and understanding between the various sections of the people, promoting democracy and secularism and securing social, economic and political justice, irrespective of caste considerations. It identified such problems of the minorities as the recognition of Urdu as the second official language in U.P., immediate restoration of the Muslim minority character of the Aligarh Muslim University, adequate representation of backward classes, scheduled castes and other minorities on the National Integration Council, revision of school and college text books on literature, history and allied subjects, securing the cessation of communal riots, adequate representation of all the minorities in all government services, equal opportunities in trade and commerce and preventing legislation being enacted to enable the government to divert the proceeds of any religious endowments or trusts to purposes other than those for which they were created. The fulfilment of these objects would give sufficient weight and strength to these minorities to become effective in the national life of the country.

The Muslim League is a major political organization of the Muslim community in Kerala. Essentially a regional party, lately it has made successful headway in the other parts of the country, aiming at becoming a truly all-India party



and the only political representative organization of Indian Muslims. The Muslim League is perhaps the only Muslim party which is successfully responding to the demands of the game of parliamentary politics.

The Indian Union Muslim League was born after the emergence of Pakistan as a separate homeland of the Muslims. In the forties the Muslim League had demanded Pakistan and got it. This naturally created a number of problems for the Muslims who chose to remain in India. It is true that a complete exchange of population between India and Pakistan on the basis of religion was impossible. In the changed situation what was the future of the Muslim League in India? It should be mentioned here that a major segment of the Muslim League leadership on the eve of partition favoured the dissolution of the party in Independent India. In 1948 the Muslim members of Constituent Assembly under the leadership of Nawab Ismail Khan decided by a majority vote to disband the party. But the League leaders of South India did not agree with Nawab Ismail Khan's view on the future of the party. Mr. Mohammed Ismail of Madras believed that the continuity of the League as a political institution would be in the interest of the community. The creation of Pakistan had generated an element of bitterness and a simmering conflict in the relationship between the Hindus and Muslims in North India which was terribly affected by the vast migration of Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India.

The situation in South India was different. It provided a congenial atmosphere to the Muslim League to operate as the political organization of the Muslims. According to Theodore Wright (Jr.) Islam came to the South peacefully compared to the North. Arab traders propagated the faith by persuasion and example rather than conquest and force. They inter-married with Hindu women and produced the Mopalas of Malabar, the Navaitas of Kanara and Lebbais, Marra-kayars and Rowthiers of Madras. Secondly, most South Indian Muslims speak dialects of

Malayalam, Tamil and Gujarati, languages of their Hindu neighbours. Thirdly, except during the brief rule of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore, the Sultans of Madurai in the 14th century, and the Nawab of Arcot in the 18th century, the Muslims never dominated the South politically.

chose to support the anti-Congress formula of Dr. Lohia.

The results of the fourth general elections were not satisfactory from the point of view of the Muslims. The Mushawarat itself was partly responsible for this situation. Instead of being instrumental in the promotion of communal accord, the U.P. Mushawarat gave a communal colour to several issues, like the 1965 trouble at Aligarh and the Urdu issue. It raised the bogey of "Islam in danger" and that of the culture phobia. The Muslims soon realised that the new pattern of power was not going to benefit them because of the absence of proportional representation. Without it, democracy could not be shared with the minorities.



The Mushawarat has never been a full-fledged political party nor has it intended to become one. But certain ambitious leaders of the Mushawarat were not satisfied with this position.

In April 1968 a separate political party, the Muslim Majlis, was established. It was thrown open to Indian nationals, irrespective of religion, caste or creed, who agreed to protect the religious, political, social, economic and other rights of Muslims and other backward classes. The declared aims and objectives of the Majlis are to maintain the independence, integrity and honour of India, to develop self-confidence, unity and tole-

rance among Muslims, to do away with untouchability, to try to maintain the secular democratic and welfare character of the State and to cooperate with the central Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat in matters relating to the well-being of Muslims.

Dr. A.J. Faridi, its prominent leader, explaining the reasons for the establishment of the Majlis, argued that the Muslims were living in a "state of perpetual doom" particularly in the Hindi-speaking areas. The problem of retaining the Islamic way of life and dignity, he said, was directly a political one and ought to be tackled through political channels to bring quick results.

Dr. Faridi also held that the Muslims' association with other political parties had not had any satisfactory results. The outcome of joining the Congress had been "a frittering away of the energies of a section of people which could easily mould the politics of the country into healthier channels". Besides, the socialist parties ignored the danger of the RSS pseudo-soldiers who aimed at demoralizing the Muslims and strengthening the reactionary political forces in the country.

It was also declared that 94 per cent of the country's population should be brought under one banner, "to end the rule of six per cent caste Hindus who had seized all power and wealth in the country". Keeping in view this character Dr. Faridi said that the Majlis was a non-communal party with a communal name.

On October 13, 1968, the All India Federation of Muslims and Scheduled Caste and Backward classes was formed under the auspices of the Muslim Majlis. This was the first step taken by the Majlis to forge a political alliance with the depressed classes and enlist Muslims' support in seeking redress of their grievances. The federation consisted of the representatives of the Majlis, the U.P. Sikh Pratidinhi Board, the Republican Party, and the Christian community.

The federation asserted that the Hindu community had established its hegemony which perpetuated a sense of fear, disintegration and economic dependence in the



They remained self-reliant merchants, fisherman and peasants, and did not look to the government for jobs and privileges as much as their co-religionists in the North. Fourthly, the Muslim League leadership of the South was not drained to Pakistan in 1947, in marked contrast to the North. Fifthly, practically no communal rioting accompanied partition in the South. Lastly, there are local pockets in Malabar on the coast with a Muslim majority.(4)

The political approach of the Muslim League leaders can be understood if one looks at the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly. In the Constituent Assembly Mr. B. Pocker and Mr. K.T. Ahmad Ibrahim supported separate electorates for the Muslims at the state as well as the national level. It was strongly favoured by Chowdhary Khaliq-u-Zaman. The rationale advanced was that Muslims would be able to send their "true" representatives to the legislative bodies; their leaders would present the demands and voice the grievances of the community. This move was opposed by Sardar Patel and a few Muslim members. The Muslim League members also demanded that if separate electorates were done away with, every member of the legislature should poll at least 30% of the votes of his own community. The Muslim League also desired the retention of reservations in the legislative bodies. They feared that the strength of Muslim legislators would be considerably reduced in the absence of separate electorates. The Muslim League members in the Constituent Assembly also vehemently opposed the idea of the common civil code. It was termed as undemocratic, anti-religious and the imposition of the will of the majority on the minority. Mr. Mohd. Ismail also advocated religious education in schools for the children of every religion. The League leaders also supported the inclusion

of Urdu in the VIIIth Schedule of the Constitution. Mr. Mohd. Ismail in his speech of 26th January 1950 said, that the Constitution was defective, regarding the minorities because it did not grant a separate electorate; there was no reservation for Muslims in government services; no guarantee for the protection of the Personal Law and no religious education for children in government schools. These political and cultural issues became the guiding principles of the Muslim League's functioning in independent India.

After 1948, the centre of the Muslim League's activities was Madras. In 1951 the Constitution of the party, which emphasised the socio-economic and cultural rights of the Muslims and other minorities was drafted. The need for the promotion of cordial relations between the Muslims and other communities was also stressed. But what made the League a respectable pressure group was their intelligent participation in electoral politics. The political leaders of various parties did not hesitate to ally themselves with the communal groups for partisan ends. For example, during the municipal elections of Madras in 1952, the Congress wanted to enter into an electoral alliance with the League, but did not accept the League's demand that seats for Muslims should be reserved according to the population. After 1952 the League successfully indulged in politics of alliances, sometimes with the D.M.K. and Swatantra Party and sometimes with the Congress and the Communists. It is important to note the Muslim League's attitude regarding electoral politics in the country. Unlike other Muslim organizations in the country, the League displayed little hesitation and resistance in participating in parliamentary democratic elections. Thus the League determined the

pattern of Muslim politics in the years to come.

Minority political organizations in any democratic competitive polity have to follow the principles of compromises and alliances. The compromises and alliances are mostly pragmatic, if not opportunistic. The League contested elections in Kerala where the percentage of the Muslim population is 19.50%, Tamil Nadu 5.11%, Mysore 10.63%, Bengal 20.4%, Bihar 13.48%, Maharashtra 8.40% and U.P. 15.48%. It is also interesting to mention that the League has no foothold in predominantly Muslim areas like Jammu and Kashmir and Lakshwadeep.

There are nine districts in the country in which Muslims form more than 50 per cent of population but the Muslim League has political influence in only one district in Kerala. Another striking feature is that it is articulate and vocal in states where the Muslim population is less than 10% with the exception of Kerala because in these areas alone, it can afford the luxury of raising non-issues to mobilise the masses. For example, in Bombay, the League became a force to reckon with at the corporation level. In the assembly elections of 1972 also the League registered a big success. In both these elections the League concentrated its campaign on the issue of Muslim Personal Law, Bihari Muslims in Bangladesh and the singing of 'Vande Mataram'. All these issues raised by the League had nothing to do with the real problems of the Muslims in different states. Instead of politically advancing the community, the League thrives on the fundamentalist and conservative idiom and harping on non-issues. The question of the singing of 'Vande Mataram' did accentuate tension not only in Bombay but in other parts of the state. The culmination was the Poona riots in which the worst sufferers were the poor Muslims.

It is, however, to be noted that the League's participation in the elections paid dividends. In various states it could make its presence felt and it could play a crucial role in the formation and the survival of the governments. In Kerala it holds the balance. In Bombay corporation its role is significant in the establishment of non-Congress coalitions. It seems

that the Muslim League is interested in sharing power, even at the cost of sacrificing the vital interests of the community and its own stated principles.

The Muslim League ignores vital facts of the Indian situation and its entire politics concentrates on the problems of the urban Muslim population. The issues which it raises are those of a very small section of the community. Its stand to contest the U.P. elections on the Aligarh Muslim University issue alone, can be mentioned here. It forgets that the overwhelming Muslim population is rural. Besides, of the 30 districts in the country where the Muslim population is more than 20% and less than 50% the Muslim League has a hold only in a few districts.



The foregoing account of the ideology and the working of three Muslim organizations shows that they are mainly concerned with the cultural and religious problems of the Muslim community. Not that they are devoid of political understanding but they are dominated by religio-cultural considerations. The emphasis on religion and culture is not accidental but quite deliberate. These organizations view the Muslims as a monolithic, well-knit and homogenous community and consequently characterize the religious and cultural problem as identical. These organizations do not recognise different social and economic classes with contradictory and conflicting political interests, as that recognition spells disunity and weakness. The leaders of these organizations consider themselves as the 'true' representatives of the "millat". In this context their demands for separate electorate should be appreciated.

Secondly, Muslim organizations are basically conservative and fundamentalist in their ideological postures and political



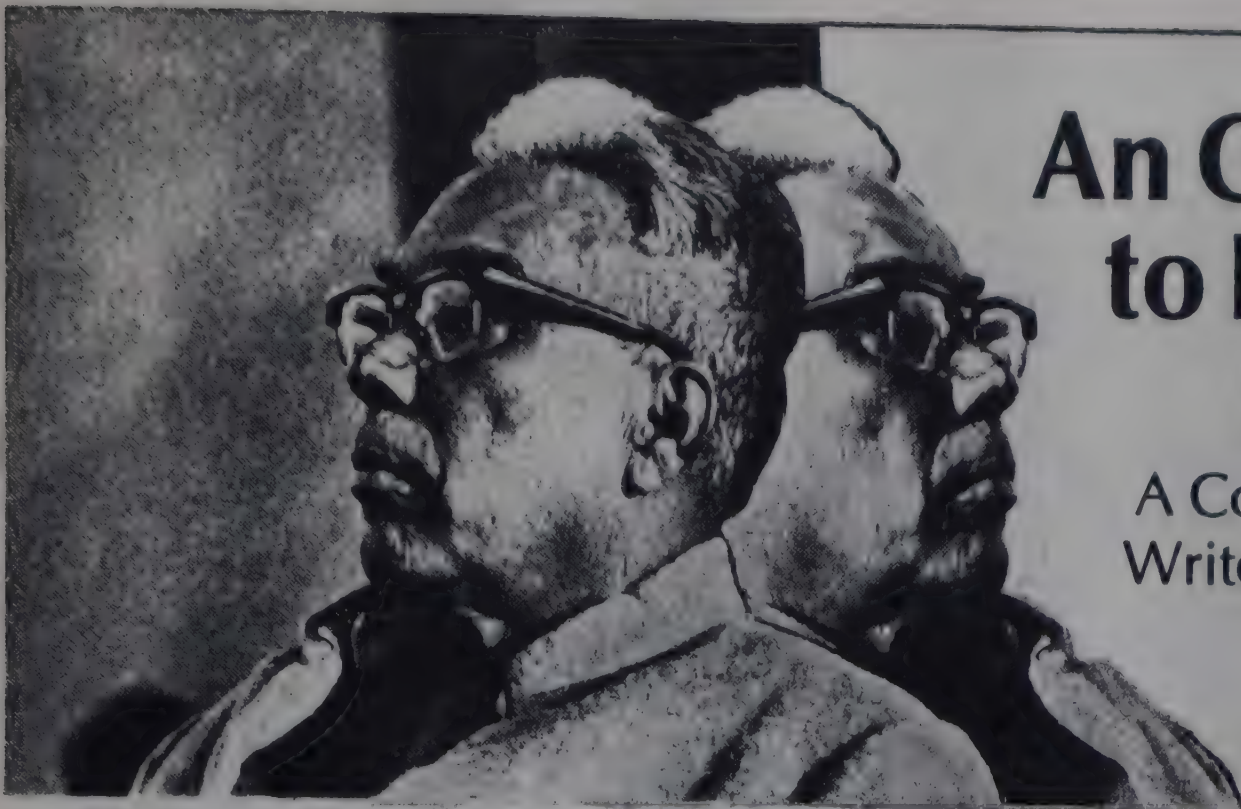
approaches. The manipulation of religion and the religious idiom reinforces communal identity and solidarity. Of course, religion is used for mobilisational purposes as well as for maintaining a conservative sway over the masses. These organizations are certainly closer to other reactionary organizations of the different communities, like the R.S.S., the B.J.P. or the Arya Samaj. The 'Islam' of these organizations is an ally of retrogressive politics in the country and it also protects the elitist nature of Muslim politics.

Thirdly, Muslim organizations seem to be concerned with the 'symbolic' rather than the 'substantive' aspect of the Indian political system. Their manifestoes betray a deliberate effort to ignore the economic problems of the Muslim masses. Their opposition to socialism or communism

is the salient feature of their economic doctrine. They maintain that communism is the greatest threat to Islam and Muslims not only in India but throughout the world, as spiritualism and ethics do not have any place in the communist system. They also believe that communism is opposed to human rights and civil liberties. The Muslim organizations also claim that they do not favour capitalism because it is based on profit. Islam, therefore, is the golden mean between capitalism and communism. Interestingly enough, the concept of man and society of the leaders of Muslim organizations is very much in keeping with the philosophy which sustains and promotes capitalism. Muslim organizations hold the individual as the basic unit of society; private ownership is the law of nature; planning leads to totalitarianism; economic class considerations are unnatural and artificial; agrarian reforms and rapid industrialization are unsuitable; and competitive enterprise should be guaranteed. They also uphold the notion that the government should not interfere in the economic sphere but merely provide guidance to industrial policy. All these principles are those of the capitalist system which produce exploitation, poverty, unemployment and inequality. One fails to understand why communal organizations consider the right to property and competitive enterprise so sacrosanct if they have the welfare of poor Muslims in mind. It betrays either the ignorance of the nature of economic systems or a deliberate attempt to make politics subservient to the interests of the few in the name of Islam.

Notes and References:-

1. See 'Assam', Economic and Political Weekly, February 26, 1983, p.282.
2. Report of the Court of Inquiry into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953, Lahore, 1954, p.228-230.
3. See Daawat (Urdu), April 14, 1982, p.39.
4. Theodore Wright (Jr.), The Muslim League in South India since Independence; A strategy in minority group political strategies, The American Political Science Review, Summer, 1966, pp.580-1.



An Open Letter to Balasaheb Deoras

A Concerned Observer
Writes To The RSS Chief

Photographs by Rajesh Vora

To,
Madhukar Dattatreya Deoras,
Sar Sangh Chalak, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Hedgewar Bhawan, Nagpur.

There was a time not so long ago, when I thought that your boys in the RSS were quite harmless - with their rituals and ceremony, their prayers and drill, their *nikkers* and lathis. Altogether naive and innocent, I thought. Rather like the Boy Scouts. When reports and statements charged the RSS with inciting every communal riot, I thought that your outfit was a convenient whipping-boy for the government and the media, rather like 'the foreign hand', even though I knew that old cliché about no-smoke-without-fire.

That was some time ago. Till I went to Baroda and Meerut. Since then I have begun to notice the large-scale expression of communal sentiment everywhere, particularly the resurgence of Hindu revivalism.

It began with my meeting Jaspal Singh, police commissioner of Baroda, before he was transferred. You should have heard him speak of the "stupid fellows" and "bearded buggers" whom he was expected to protect as the senior-most police officer in the city.

Since then, I have read the utterances of Karan Singh, Gulzarilal Nanda, the four sankara-charyas, MGR and, of course, you too apart from those hundreds of hardly-known Hindus. All you're saying is nothing new to me. I have been told often enough that "Hinduism is threatened", "Hindus must unite", "Hinduism is a tolerant religion but the minorities have taken undue advantage of this virtue". This, you'll say, must stop now. "Hindus must fight back". After all, as Lord Krishna told Arjun ...

There was a time when this kind of hyperbole was confined to middle-class 'drawing rooms' when the neighbours were over. Today, I am amazed by the public currency which it has gained. Obviously, someone is making capital out of all this.

I have seen the progress of a week-long Gita Gyana Yagna in the August Kranti Maidan in Bombay (now, isn't that ironic -- the yagna and Kranti?) I was part of the traffic jams on Marine Drive which arose because Murari Babu, patron saint of "endangered Hindus", was delivering spiritual discourses at Chowpatty. I heard that he had given his benediction to Jaspal Singh while he was in Baroda. A friend also mentioned that before the rioting began in Baroda, Murari Babu's audience was usually no more than a few thousands. This number has now swollen to lakhs.

I find that forums with names like Vishwa Hindu Sammelan, Hindu Ekta Sammelan, Vishwa Hindu Parishad ... are multiplying geometrically. They all speak a language you are familiar

with. They tie up with the thousands of **mathams** and **samajs** that litter the country, intent on preserving the "glorious" heritage of this avowedly Hindu country.

Side-by-side, the bylanes of Baroda, Meerut, Bombay -- everywhere -- display cloth banners which I recognise now only because of their alarming similarity, always advertising some **mitra mandal's** religious or festive celebration. The props for such festivities have standardised themselves too -- loud music, which is often vulgar, coloured lights, imitation temples with tinsel gods, aartis, bells and conches. You must know of this already, so I'll skip the details for now.

You see, for a while I was confused by the barrage of my observations. I could not tell if it was my heightened perception that was exaggerating the reality, since each input sensitised me to many more. But slowly, I began to realise that the fragments of reality I was observing were not merely a spontaneous resurgence of the "humanely" Hindu spirit. Out of this understanding, undoubtedly shredded, arose a hint, a clue, a question: is there a vital link between all these separate phenomena, is there a superior body governing the functions of its various organs? The query lingered and troubled me for some time.

What was necessary was the introduction of a crustallising catalyst. And when such a moment came it was, both, coincidental and paradoxical. It was coincidental because I happened to be in Baroda the day you addressed an RSS rally at the Agiary ground. It was paradoxical because had I not heard you that day I might never have been enlightened, if you know what I mean. There was a dialectic in the situation which I must tell you about.

That day, yours was the thesis, commanding and overwhelming my colleague and me who were like two stray waifs in a dense crowd of believers. But, and here's where the dialectic comes in, your postulation triggered off a process of crystallisation in my mind. All of a sudden, the jigsaw puzzle I had constructed quickly fell into place and in the process, there arose a thesis opposed to yours. Let me elaborate with a couple of images that remain with me till today:

Vignettes of a massive RSS rally held at Pune in January this year.



One.

At the RSS marchpast that preceded the gathering. A giant centipede worms its way through narrow tense streets. On each of its hundred legs is a jackboot. Saffron flags bravely point out the route the march is taking.

Two.

At the rally. Hundreds of spectators. A hushed audience over which your strident voice booms, proclaiming the need for Hindu dominion. I tune myself to the waves of congenial Hindu harmony that the crowd exudes. In a forty-five minute speech you have made each person present there believe that only a Hindu Rashtra is the answer, the response to the fallen state of the nation. Going beyond this, you presume that the RSS with its votaries is the sole vehicle that will transport this assorted bunch of middle-class devotees to the land of milk and honey.

This task, the congregation knows, requires iron-will, courage, determination and discipline, but your boys have just shown that they have it. Look at the way they twirl lathis, salute flags and recite prayers. Virtually everybody present at the rally feels overwhelmed and the Doubting Thomases are chastened by the intoning of Sanskrit **shlokas**. They are made to feel sufficiently cretinous in the face of a proud Hindu inheritance till doubt give way to belief.

This is what is worrisome. This belief. Within the confines of a temple it is perhaps acceptable. But when it arrogantly displays itself in a parade, when it intrudes upon everyday life, this belief can be dangerous.

It is this belief that gives you confidence. To hear you is to realise that hysteria is the preserve of the frustrated. Which you do not betray at all. You speak with a smugness which is enviable and to tell you the truth, I was amazed at the quality of response you elicited from your audience -- the abject silence, the silent acknowledgement. I had to keep reassuring myself that the year is 1983, that we have not been transported back into a dark recess of Indian history.

In trying to recreate a part of your measured rhetoric not ad verbatim I must endeavour to preserve that hypnotic incantation: "People ask me, why does the RSS aspire for a Hindu Rashtra, why not Bharat, Rashtra and Bharatiya-ta. I tell them, because Bharat is Hindu, India is Hindu. There is no doubt in this. For thousands of years the Hindu dharma has been integral to Bharat. Even abroad, Indians are called Hindus. If the majority of the population of this country is Hindu, if our culture and dharma is Hindu, if our society is Hindu, then what is wrong if we call this country a Hindu Rashtra?"

A thousand heads nod.

"Now, of late, there has been a lot of **charcha** about the conversions of Harijans to Islam. Some people are saying that this happened because Hindu society practices inequality. This is wrong. Hindu dharma does not practice inequality. Even a thousand years ago Hindu sages knew about equality and democracy. In the Sangh, Harijans and Hindus perform drill together, they eat and sleep together. Hindu society is all one, it is unified. Wherever there is disunity because of caste or creed, that is bad. But we don't need outsiders to tell us that. We have had social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekanand and Aurobindo ..."

You know, we are all aware that the Hindu tradition harbours diverse elements. Often these are contradictory. But they still support a unity of beliefs because all these elements are only manifestations, at best they are varying attitudes dictated and codified in differing circumstances for over a thousand years. In the absence of an organised church and in the evolution of a Hindu philosophy, or weltanschauung, most of these elements have undergone concentrations and distillations, so that, in its essence, Hinduism projects itself as a spiritual and metaphysical corpus or knowledge that can be interpreted in as many ways as you choose.



This open-endedness is successfully exploited by its present-day spokesmen who are using it today to support the revival of militant Hinduism.

In this endeavour, they are exploiting the tension that arises out of the juxtapositioning of present-day realities vis-a-vis a dominant tradition. It has been observed throughout history that in moments when a community or a nation undergoes accelerated development, whenever its social and political structure tends to be dynamic rather than static, the classes, castes or communities at the top of the social heirarchy assumes a xenophobic and jingoistic character. When this happens a dominant tradition, often long out-moded, is sought to be reasserted as the principle means of communal salvation.

Let's talk of a society which turns in upon itself. When constant flux scares the conservative elements, makes them want to consolidate their vested interests, makes them want to arrest change. Because change signifies a loss of bourgeois security and middle-class values -- like The Family, The Tradition, The Temple of Learning, The Loss of Godhood. Isn't this what everybody's bothered about? The loss of Hindutva.

In such a situation you make complete sense with your simple and direct appeals to obscurantism. Look how Hindus cling to the achievements they made thousands of years ago. Look at millions of Hindu puffed-up chests recalling those golden, halcyon days. And you, with your vast knowledge of the Hindu shastras encapsulate these ditty dreams into ritualistic Sanskrit **shlokas**. The process of rejuvenation is complete and everybody feels a lot better. They can now revel in the scientific temper of Hindu society, recall Aryabhatta, Panini et al, forgetting that every year more than 20,000 doctors and engineers leave the country's shores for want of employment.

This is a typical game of leapfrogging which you and your ilk are very good at. You take a modern point of reference, plunge back a thousand years and find a parallel there. Which

is all very well but you do not leave it at that. You expect us to believe that because Hindu society was vigorous then, merely a reassertion of Hindutva will solve the modern problems of India in 1983. And people believe you.

In this respect, what Ved Mehta wrote in *The New India* more than a decade ago was perceptive and bears repetition ... "Signs of backward-looking political and religious nationalism are everywhere. On All India Radio, there are daily news broadcasts in Sanskrit. There is constant talk of the glories of ancient India -- about how the Hindus in Vedic times travelled around in 'flying machines', talked to each other on 'skyphones' and constructed 'bridges of stones' spanning oceans. The heroic feats and the anthropomorphic characteristics of devas, or gods, and assuras, or demons, in the ancient Hindu epics are being taken literally again ..."

There is so much currency to such beliefs that one would think that the Hindus have done enough **punya** for several **janams**. So no one bats an eyelid when a young bride gets burnt to death for her dowry. Or Harijans are killed because they are Harijans and dared to raise their voices. Politically, you have agitated against reservations for backward communities. Communally, you have institutionalised the killings of Muslims. Economically, you stand for exploitation and inequity. Socially and philosophically, you stand for degradation of the human spirit since you deny the egalitarian basis of modern citizenship.

Through this process, the economic and political dimensions of a nation's development get rapidly inter-woven with the social, communal and religious groupings that exist and these reach virtually every member of society. The throes of industrial development are adequately reflected in the lives of individuals participating in it and their chaotic experiences often warrant a crutch, an answer to the apparent madness visible everywhere. Whenever a healthy and dynamic modern response cannot be found to shape the situation, ante-diluvian systems are hastily grafted on. With disastrous results.

Look at what happened to Germany and its Third Reich, its blue-blooded Aryans. See the similar fate of the Duce and his Republic or Hirohito with his Bushido code. Still we cannot resist falling into the same trap ourselves for who doesn't want to be told that his or her community or nation was great. Once upon a time ... its borders were far-flung and everybody was prosperous. In India, such a fairy tale is further substantiated by claims that we even possessed atomic knowledge and weapons while jet aircraft were not uncommon too.



The Hindu feels so proud of his glorious heritage that he is unwilling to accept the fact that it was only because Hindu or Indian society was so inherently weak and powerless that it could not withstand the successive waves of pressures from preponderant systems that came from without -- Islam and colonialism.

Even after seven hundred years of a material history that challenges any claim regarding the strength of Hindu society and that leaves no room to believe that any impulses towards modernism can spring from within it, the core of Hindu tradition is still hearkened back to.

Meanwhile, any impulses from without are treated as foreign, alien and somehow unworthy of being accepted within the Hindu belief system. The Hindu will still believe that his religion, or way or thought, has contemporary relevance though it is plain that the last vestiges of a powerful Hindu social reform movement cannot be traced since after the emergence and spread of Arya Samajism, which, too, was an extremely restricted and reactionary response to the decadent nature of Hindu society in the nineteenth century.

I suspect that the genesis of this problem can be traced to the static nature of Hindu society, and in particular to the amazingly flexible nature of the Brahmins who, as a group, have been entirely successful in adapting to changing circumstances and preserving their social hegemony over affairs Hindu. A parallel to this singular feat, of one caste or class maintaining its social position for several centuries, cannot be found. The achievement is even more spectacular when it is considered that, by and large, this social group has exercised a parasitic hold over the rest of Hindu society even while monopolising a certain brand of knowledge which has since long been redundant and inane. Since the Brahmins have intervened in every stage of the development of Indian history, and because they have always sought to maintain their dominance, they have vitiated any attempts to change the Hindu social fabric, thereby effectively restraining the rest of the society from a movement that can purge and cleanse Hindu society of the canker of ritualism, inequality and social tyranny.

So much so that even movements that originated in revolt against Brahmanical orthodoxy and ritualism -- Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and the Bhakti movement period -- are today sought to be subsumed within the Greater Hindu wheel. You say it too. That these are after all only off-springs of Hinduism.

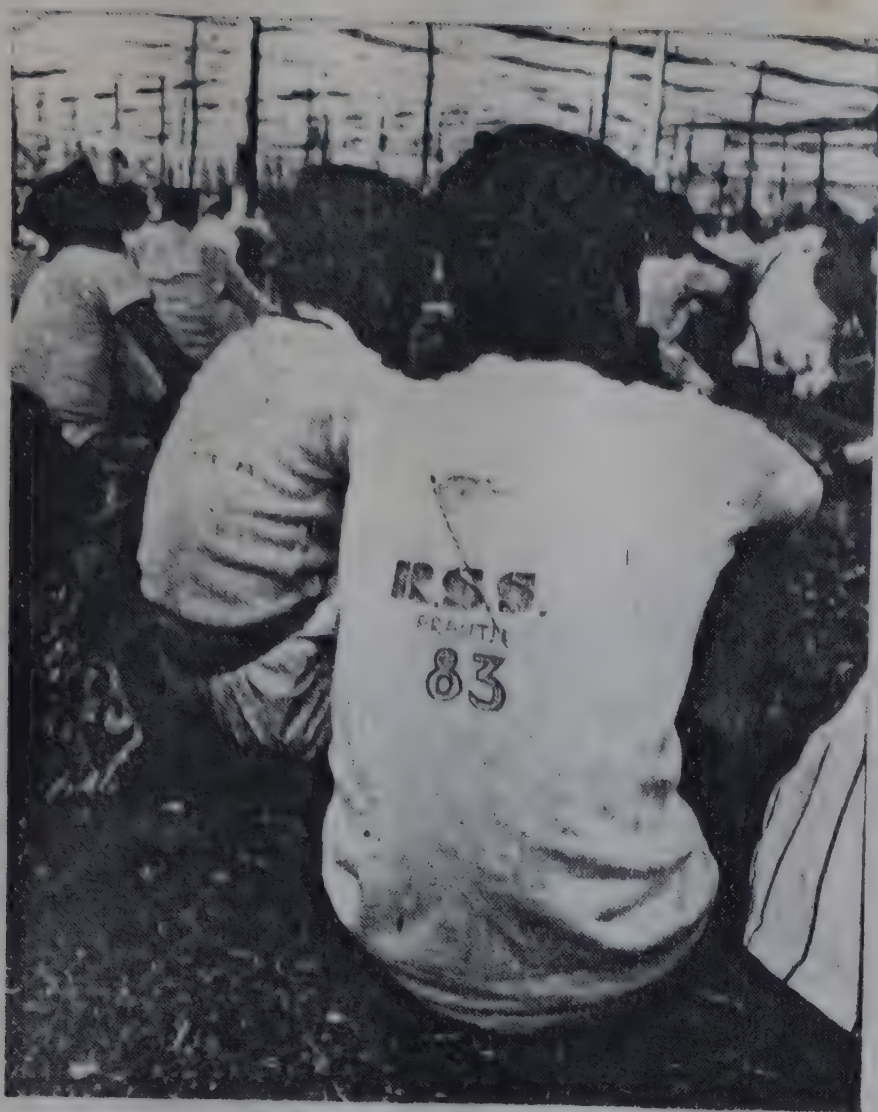
If we position this tendency within more recent historical parameters we find that even the initial social and cultural response to British colonialism was collaborationist, till economic developments and the pressure of an indigenous bourgeoisie made it imperative to adopt a nationalist stand.

In this too, the genuine need for securing a hold over the instruments of government, self-dominion, which was demanded by the national bourgeoisie, was defined ideologically in Brahmanical terms. The philosophical weaponry used to mobilise anti-British opinion emanated out of Brahmin perceptions, which is why the freedom movement finally, at this level, degenerated merely into an anti-imperialist struggle while the need for establishing a genuine socialist democracy was ignored and conveniently set aside.

Your organisation, the RSS, occupies that recess in Indian history reserved for reactionary, conservative and communal organisations. Before you object that you are not alone, let me state that there are many more in this dark nook -- like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jamaat-e-Islami, and for that matter any other body that seeks to impose upon modern Indian society an outlook that springs out of false divides based on religion and caste.

It is no coincidence that the inception of the RSS was born out of an alliance of Brahmins and decadent feudal lords, since both of them were insecure of their social positions in the fast-changing circumstances of the 1920s.

It also speaks volume for the apprehensions of the Hindu petty-trading classes, as well as some large industrial houses, that they too have chosen to align themselves with dictates that emanate from outside the economic development of the country.



Let us look at the ideological basis of the utterings we are increasingly hearing from all parts of the country. To put it frankly, the ideology of the RSS is at best a bunch of thoughts, a relic of the past which was unfortunately not exorcised during the freedom movement. Today under differing circumstances it is raising its head again.

It is tragic that more than fifty years after the enunciation of the basic principles for the establishments of a Hindu Rashtra, the chief theoretical planks of your gurus Hedgewar and Golwalkar are still being touted as the means to the country's salvation.

Today, you are the mouthpiece for your master's voice. In their pristine form the bunch of thoughts live on and were it not for the marked increase in their chanting no one would grudge such longevity. A healthy society is capable of withstanding the toxicity of malin-gering and festering sores. But we are not speaking about a healthy society. Nor one that is sane and rational. Not if it is lapping at cliched dictums that seemed reactionary at the turn-of-the-century.

I will try to qualify the exact nature of such right reaction. Since its inception on the day of Dussehra in 1925, the RSS has been sloganeering for the acceptance of one funda-mental tenet for the country. That "Hinduism is nationalism". This by itself sounds ridiculous but since so many of you take this dictum seriously it merits our attention.

First of all, can you define "Hinduism" without bringing in further qualifications of region, caste, language, social strata, economic position ... Is there only one sort of Hindu in the country? On what is this Hindu nationalism based? Is there **one** book or **one shastra** in the Hindu tradition that refers to national Hinduism?

No wonder then for more than fifty years you have had nothing more to stand on apart from the appeals for Hindu unity, a Hindu Rashtra and Hindutva. But towards what end will this unity, once it is achieved, be used? Do you have any policy that suggests solutions for the problems of development which a bourgeois democracy seeks to address -- unemploy-ment, health, education etc. Is this unity of all Hindus an end in itself?

Or is your programme conspicuous by its absence, so that I am left to deduce that your organisation is communal because it is aimed against Muslims and other minorities. It stands for "free enterprise" because you are "anti-communist". It is Hindu because it rejects Western axioms and models while hearkening the dream of something called "Ram Rajya", which is legendary in the strictest sense of the term. It is atavistic because its entire being is based on a regression of history and because you reject and do not accept newer forces. You are unwilling to accomodate them. Quantitative and compositional changes in the membership of your organisation (like the recent induction of the scheduled castes into your pale) are not reflected in the qualitative content of the organisation's guiding principles. The Greater Brahmin Wheel rolls on and conquers, like the horse and emperor in Vedic **aswamedha** sacrifices.

I know that none of this criticism will alter the situation materially. The increasing number of members who turn up at your **shakhas** are proof enough that there are, possibly, millions in this country who subscribe to all the notions and theories you propound.

The effects of their association with you are also becoming obvious in the spread of communal violence throughout the country. For instance, in Assam and Kerala the RSS has been directly implicated in cases of arson and rioting.

In other places, various front organisations, allied to yours, have cropped up and these operate in all the spheres of Hindu life. You have, in fact, effected community participation in the reassertion of Hindu values, be it in the sphere of social get-togethers, cultural programmes, educational institutes, **pujas** and **mahapujas** etc.

All these find political shelter under the umbrella of the BJP, a party whose base depends entirely on the work of its hard-core RSS activists.

Fortunately, there are enough Indians who reject the forms you seek to impose upon the future of the country. They realise that a situation will always offer several options and that once one of them are adopted any future development will be governed by the choices that are being exercised today.

Some options are progressive. They entail an understanding of the material base of history, they require a constant search for asserting those facets of development which will be dynamic, which will lead to further progress, which will be guided by the principles for which millions the world over have fought for -- an equal and just society for all.

You might say that you too stand for this ideal. After all isn't this a definition of Ram Rajya?

Here's where the difference lies in regressive options that negate the dynamic inherent within history, that they always look behind them and project a backward development as a blue-print for the future. In doing so they yearn for a static situation. Because they uphold the present, they cannot create, for the process of creation is inextricably linked to the process of destruction.

Which is why, for those who are connected with the process of creation and destruction your option cannot exist. Your ideology, your options, will be amenable to only those who are involved in preservation, which is actually negation.

There are varying choices between these options, but spelling out the extremes makes matters clear because then we all know what the determining parameters are. Both options are here with us in India today. Both have their strengths and weaknesses. So far as we are concerned, the present-day developments are alarming and make it imperative to be serious and critical now. For, if the forces of reaction triumph, we might not get the opportunity to speak aloud thus.

From Shahenshah To Miyanbhai

The Muslim stereotype in popular cinema

The portrayal of the Muslim in Hindi commercial cinema comes from a series of preconceived notions about the people, their traditions and their culture. But the stereotype has changed in forty years, says Iqbal Masud.



Naseem and Chandra Mohan in Sohrab Modi's "Pukaar".

It all began with "Pukaar", which for me established the Muslim stereotype. The men were regal and imperially-dressed, but often condescended to light flirtation. They were never common or mean. The women were tall and slender with lovely necks like Naseem's ... we watched with a kind of desperation the ripples on her throat when she sipped water. They all spoke chaste Urdu. Their watchwords were Justice and Loyalty.

Then, in the forties, there was a transition

to modernity. These were "Muslim Socials" showing the Muslim family in the age of the common man. The men wore sherwanis, the women shalwar kameez. But the parameters had not changed.

Seeing Muslims at prayer, E.M. Forster said, "They had chosen obedience and the reward of such obedience is beauty"; contrasting them with those who "lived in the unlovely chaos between obedience and freedom". The Muslim "socials" chose obedience, hardly daring to peep into the chaos outside of them. This trend continued from the forties into the sixties. Among the socials churned out during this time were "Dard", "Palki", "Chaudvin Ka Chand", and "Mere Mehboob". The world was a middle-middle class world, heartbreaks were middle-class problems too, and the whole ambience was poetic, precious and lyrically decadent. But there was another side to this development. "Muslim culture" was being "sold" to non-Muslims in an idealised form and it was this form that pressed Muslims into conforming to that image.

But, perhaps I am being unfair. Even the makers of Muslim socials could not shut their eyes and ears to history. Nirad C. Choudhari called the Muslims "The Least of the Minorities". The process of economic decline of the Indian Muslims began long before Partition and continued unabatedly after it. The proportion of the "absolutely poor" among them rose sharply, the size and population of their ghettos increased, and job opportunities for their young shrank. Their loyalties became, and remained, suspect.

An underlying note of increasing misery is heard in these socials — children taken from orphanages and groomed as husbands for daughters, girls being considered for "sacrificial" marriages to save the havelis from being auctioned. Melodramatic? Yes. But indicative of a real, calamitous decline.

To bring this decline up-to-date we now have the latest version of the Muslim stereotype — the Bandit with a Golden Heart. In two bandit movies, released in

the last two years — "Ahinsa" and "Ganga Aur Suraj" — he is the second-in-command of The Gang — secretly decent, wearing an Allah disc, dying for the right cause and proclaiming very audibly his faith. You can almost hear the patronage : "They have their points, these Muslims". From Shahenshah to Daku — a long journey is charted in film stereotypes.

Two Muslim socials need comment. The first is Kamal Amrohi's "Pakeezah". "Pakeezah" is not really about a courtesan. It is the spectacle of Shurafa (upper-middle class) culture in decline. In fact, the graveyard scene where the abandoned courtesan (Meena Kumari's mother in the film) lives and dies is central to the film. Kamal said he hunted the length and breadth of the land for a suitable graveyard. Meena Kumari herself (the courtesan) is saved not by the will of the community but by chance. The claustrophobic atmosphere of a Muslim middle-class family has been brilliantly captured in "Pakeezah". There is a funereal ambience in the film which expresses the community's neuroses and anxieties.

And so to M.S. Sathyu's "Garam Hawa" — a landmark in the history of Muslim socials. It does not run away from the Hindu-Muslim problem nor does it view it rosily (like Shantaram's "Padosi"). It asks inconvenient, embarrassing questions. A grateful salute to Sathyu for that. Why then, a friend asks, do you have reservations about the film ?

Firstly, it does not tackle with a sense of history, the tangled question of Muslim identity. Few characters are shown going to Pakistan out of conviction or ideology.

Surely this is a limiting historical vision. Secondly, a prominent character who goes to Pakistan is made the subject of extremely superficial satire. Third, the stereotype of Muslim "poetic" ambience is retained inspite of being explicitly mocked. The seduction of the girl takes place under the shadow of the Taj; the girl's suicide is unbearably glamourised; and, the old women's attachment to the haveli is excessively sentimentalised. Finally, having Mirza and his son join the procession is yet another cliché — "Muslims have joined the mainstream and their problems have now merged with the problems of the people".

I think it is not leftism, but fashionable, facile leftism (a very different thing) which has limited the otherwise remarkable "Garam Hawa". An expert on modern Islam, G.H. Jansen, has said : "Islam is not merely a religion. It is a total and unified way of life; it is a culture, a civilisation. It is a spiritual and human totality". This may be anathema to some progressives. But unless the graininess, the irreducible Muslim quality of life of the community and its economic deprivation is accepted and displayed — warts and all — without aggression or apology, no credible film about Indian Muslims can be made.

In the post - "Garam Hawa" period, three trends become noticeable. One is the

Strengthening the status quo: Raj Babbar and Salma Agha in "Nikaah".





"Deedar-e-yaar": A travesty of Muslim social life.

continuation of the old haveli family drama. Prime recent examples of this are "Nikaah" and "Deedar-i-Yaar".

"Nikaah" is an interesting film seen from the angle of the Muslim stereotype. Though it claims to boldly tackle a burning social problem — that of "accelerated" Muslim divorce (legal, even if frowned upon by the theologians) — it does so within such conventional parameters that its point is blunted. Take the "hero", played by Raj Babbar. He is paan-chewing, sherwani-clad poet — a throwback to the "Mere Mehboob" days. Salma Agha, is the typical delicate-as-a-flower kurta and gharara girl, lovable and helpless as a gazelle. The whole ambience of the film is as Nawabi as it was in the sixties, the fifties, the forties ... Indeed the filmic Muslim middle-class is the one fixed star in a turbulent firmament. On the surface, there is some advance in the critique of Muslim society as in "Nikaah" when the quick divorce is shown to be disastrous. But the way Salma wails at

the end to protest against the practice is as reactionary as a surrender to it.

To put this in a different way, as long as the form of the Muslim social is imprisoned in the U.P. - Persian - Urdu culture — elegant-men, delicate-women trap — you will never get a progressive, or even a common or garden realistic, film about Indian Muslims. In fact films such as "Nikaah" will only strengthen the status quo in middle-class Muslim society.

"Deedar-i-Yaar", another travesty of Muslim social life, was a bad mix of "Mere Mehboob" and "Nikaah". By the time it was released the public had had a surfeit of "Muslim" culture and the film flopped at the box-office.

The second trend seen in the post - "Garam Hawa" period is an updated "Padosi" theme. It must be said to the credit of the popular and commercial Hindi cinema that it has always preached communal harmony — but, by its very nature has not projected

harmony in acceptable cinematic terms. "Abdullah" is an awful example of raucous propaganda in favour of national integration. Raj Kapoor play the part of a "good" Muslim who brings up a Hindu boy in the Hindu faith. The point about such "integration" films is that they play up religiosity so much that unwittingly they become vehicles of religious propaganda. Filmic "integration" does not encourage liberalism within the respective religions.

The last trend in the depiction of the Muslim stereotype, perhaps, corresponds to the actual social or economic situation of the majority of Muslims. This stereotype can be given the generic name of Miyanbhai, corresponding to the Sam Spade stereotype for the Black in American films. He has some resemblance to the Daku mentioned earlier but the film is urban-based. There is a whiff of the smuggler about him.

He generally lives in a sleazy part of the town, is sleepy, sensuous and riotous in turn. When he has a family it is usually large. He talks in his own patois — in fact he glories in it. But with all this, he still has a heart of gold and, like

the daku, will lay down his life for a friend. He is also religious in a blind and emotional fashion and you can usually see visions of hajis milling round the Kaaba during qawwalis, which the Miyanbhai either attends or in which he participates.

These are high emotional moments for the Muslim audience which cheers and throws coins. It would be easy to look down on this kind of emotional outpouring. But let us look at it in this way. A large number of lower-middle class Muslims live alienated lives in ghettos. They cannot relate to a Shahenshah, a junior Daku or a poet. They can, however, relate to a little man who preserves his integrity — Kulbhushan in that decent little film "Nakhuda", who educates a Hindu boy, or Johnny Walker in the recent "Rishta Kagaz Ka" who protects and helps Nutan — and can laugh and cry with him. Sentimental, yes. False ? No.

It has been a long journey from Shahenshah to Miyanbhai. But it has been a journey of truth — a sad truth, perhaps, but a truth nevertheless.

Counterpoints

Reports on minority marginalisation

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL
326, V Main, I Block
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Bangalore-560034
India



Reports

Aligarh: Political Instigation

The Aligarh disturbances originated from an incident that took place on September 12, 1978 between the supporters of two Akharas of wrestlers, namely Shanti Kunj and Turriya Shah on the issue of the declaration of the district winner in a bout held in Khareshwar Mela, near Aligarh City. Shanti Kunj is headed by a Hindu Khalifa and most of its members are Hindus. On the other hand Turriya Shah is led by a Muslim Khalifa and the majority of its members are Muslims.

On the night of 13/14th September, 1978, one Shri Sharma was assaulted by some Muslims. His nephew was with him at the time of assault, but he was not attacked. On the same night around 12.30 a Muslim boy going in a rickshaw was stabbed. In both the cases arrests were made the same night. As it was suspected that these two incidents had a direct or indirect link with the incident of Khareshwar Mela the district authorities called a meeting of a peace committee next day i.e. 14th September 1978 and also arranged a get-together of the leaders of both the communities. At these meetings, the leaders of both the communities expressed faith in each other and stated that the incidents of Khareshwar Mela had no communal over-tones.

On the night of 15/16th September 1978, another Hindu namely Khacher Mal Jagdish Prasad was stabbed allegedly by Muslims. After this incident, the strength of the PAC stationed in Aligarh was increased and the district authorities took the following further precautions to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

- (i) Preventive arrests of 248 Goondas (143 Hindus and 105 Muslims)
- (ii) Strict observance of opening hours of commercial shops in the city.

- (iii) Closing night cinema shows.
- (iv) Checking and interrogation of persons moving late at night.

On the night of 3/4 October 1978, one Shri Suresh Chandra Sharma alias Bhoora was stabbed allegedly by Muslims. The interrogation of Bhoora indicated that he had set up a tea stall in Khareshwar Mela and it was alleged by Muslims that he had taken an active part in throwing stones on them. Bhoora also stated that he was not on good terms with one of the accused named Habib as the former had objected to his eve-teasing activities at Laxmi Cinema.

After this incident, the district authorities banned two akharas and made preventive arrests of undesirable characters. Amongst those arrested, one Shri Sri Kishan happened to be an office-bearer of Congress (I), while another, Shri Jaipal was found to be a close associate of Shri K.K. Navman, President of City Janata Party. A delegation of Cong.(I) met the district authorities and alleged that Shri Sri Kishan had been arrested on political considerations but when they came to know that a close associate of the City Janata Party President had also been arrested, they felt satisfied and went back.

The condition of Bhoora went on deteriorating and he died in the Civil hospital at 2.35 p.m. the same day i.e. 5th October, 1978. A Panchanama was being prepared by police officers for sending the body for post mortem examination. Two Magistrates and two police officers were present at the hospital. A number of armed policemen were also present and more policemen were available nearby. However, a crowd of 30 or 40 Hindus collected at the spot and prevented the body of Bhoora from being taken for the post mortem examination and removed the body from the hospital. They carried the body in procession shouting slogans such as 'Khoon Ka Badla Khoon Se Lenge' and instead of taking the body directly to Bhoora's house through the shortest route, it was taken by a circuitous route passing

through Muslim localities. The procession was followed by the four officers mentioned above and also by a number of armed policemen. No attempt seems to have been made by the officers or by the police to stop the procession, although there was sufficient police force available along the route of the procession. Meanwhile rioting seems to have broken out in certain areas of the town. A number of shops and houses were burnt or looted. At this stage, police opened fire in which one Muslim was killed at Phool Chauraha. The Commission found bullet marks on the walls of houses, some of them situated deep inside the Muslim localities and also on the walls inside the mosque and the wooden ceiling of the verendah of the mosque near Phool Chauraha, indicating that firing was done either from the entrance of the mosque or after entering the mosque. The Commission also found blood stains inside the houses of some Muslims which indicated that the Muslims were shot while they were inside their houses. On the same evening there was large scale arson and looting of Muslim houses at Manek Chowk. It is also alleged that in this incident two Muslims were burnt to death and a number of Muslims were fatally stabbed. It would appear that no effort was made by the police to prevent these violent incidents.

On the night between 7th and 8th November, there were a number of incidents of stabbing and bursting of fire-crackers. The Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, who was informed of these incidents, met the Divisional Commissioner Shri Tandon and requested him to take necessary measures to control the situation. Shri Tandon at first denied that there was any incident but later on 7 or 8 Muslims were found with stab injuries inside their houses and they were removed to the Medical College Hospital. In spite of these incidents during the night the authorities decided to relax the curfew from 9.00 a.m. on 8th November. A large number of deputationists appearing before the Commission were of the view that relaxation of curfew on 8th November was mainly responsible for the spate of violence that erupted on that day.

After the stabbing and death of Bhoora, the extremely communal-minded section of the Hindus appeared to have planned attacks on Muslims. Shri Krishna Kumar Navman, President of the City Janata Party of Aligarh

and his close associates, by all accounts, seem to have played a very prominent role in these plans and their later execution. He was reported by a number of persons to have been an active RSS worker in the past. Now, as a prominent local Janata official, he seems to have been throwing his weight about and influencing the local government officials. Many of the deputationists who were examined by the Commission stated that the RSS was behind the planning of violence against the Muslim community.

From Minorities Commission Report on Communal Disturbances in Aligarh on Oct-Nov 1978.

Jamshedpur: RSS Hand

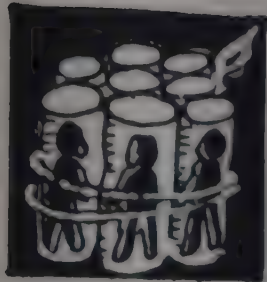
The chain of events unmistakably reveal the working of the minds of the Akharawalas and the rigidity of the communally-minded Hindus. By the afternoon of the 10th of April (1979) it became crystal clear that they were in no mood to agree to any route other than the one through Road No. 14 (a road passing through mainly Muslim areas).

Despite assurances to the local authorities to reconsider their decision about this matter, they did not yield a bit. Their assurances...were mere pretentions...

Judged from the facts and circumstances... (the answer to the question of whether) the members of the minority community were terribly afraid of the consequences of the intransigence of the Akhara Samities who were said to be working under the influence of the RSS...the answer must clearly be in the affirmative (pgs. 23,24)

After giving careful and serious consideration to all the materials that are on record, the commission is of the view that the RSS, with the extensive organisation in Jamshedpur and close links with the Jan Sangh and the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, had a positive hand in creating a climate which was most propitious for the outbreak of communal disturbances (pg. 33).

From the Report of the Jitendra Narain Inquiry Commission on the communal riots in Jamshedpur, April 1979.



Comment

A Shocking Indifference

In the days to come we shall assuredly hear a lot of Mrs Gandhi's letter to her Cabinet colleagues, published on May 12, for it represents only the opening salvo in a desperate campaign to win back the alienated Muslim vote. That the Muslim League leaders stoogily rushed to welcome it reflects only the clumsiness of the orchestration.

There is not one of the 15 points listed in that letter which has not been promised earlier whether in the Congress (I) manifesto or the National Integration Council — special courts, recruitment to public services, provisions of education opportunities, etc. The truth is, as even Syed Mir Qasim was constrained to admit in a press interview in April, that "we have not implemented our promises" made in the Congress (I) election manifesto in 1980. "These were not vague or attractive promises. All these were concrete promises". When he made these remarks, Syed Saheb could not have been unaware of the fact that in her well-publicised letter to Mr Shah Nawaz Khan on January 21, 1983, Mrs Gandhi had claimed that "They have been largely fulfilled or action taken to fulfil them by the Central Government." If that be so, why the anxiety now, pray? There is a glaring contrast between the arrogant tone of that letter and the soothing tone of the latest missive, written only four months later.

A survey of these years (1980-82) shows a shocking indifference to electoral pledges. The Congress (I) promised to "strengthen and give statutory status to the Minorities Commission" as well as to set up "a high power panel" to ascertain "if the benefits of various fiscal policies of Governments, both Union and States, do really reach" the minorities and the other weaker sections of society. If words mean anything these pledges implied the establishment of independent bodies manned by independent people, not by old faithfuls. On May 10, 1980, the "high power" panel was set up headed by Dr Seyid Muhammad with Mr Khurshid Alam Khan as Member-Secretary. The Chairman was soon appointed

India's High Commissioner in London and was succeeded by Dr Gopal Singh who immediately thereafter in a press interview on October 10 "refuted" the charge that the minorities, especially the Muslims and the Harijans, had not benefitted from the Government's fiscal policies."

From "Mrs Gandhi and the Muslims";

A.G. Noorani, Indian Express, May 26, 1983

'We Kept Them Out'

Mr K.F. Rustomji, a member of the National Police Commission and former Director of the BSF (said) in June 1979:

"We suspected the Muslims, in turn (after Partition), derided them, kept them away from the services. We would not allow them to develop trade; no licenses, no support, no funds. They were considered unreliable... steadily, the Muslims went down economically and socially, while speeches were made about our secularism..."

From A.G. Noorani's 'What is 'Communalism'? Opinion, Dec 28, 1982



Employment

Government Must Lead Way

In considering the problem of employment of Muslims, as of many other segments of our population, one is constrained by the lack of availability of detailed data. Indeed, one particular proposal, which will be made in this paper more than once is that the Government agencies must collect and make them available so that the dimensions of the problem can be properly understood and steps to deal with it be considered with greater assurance.

As matters stand, it is widely believed that Muslims are not able to enter in anything like proper numbers a whole range of categories of employment; and such fragmentary data as sometimes becomes available (e.g. lists of successful candidates at administrative services examinations, or at a less reliable level, lists of Indian Army POWs in the conflict with Pakistan) tend to support such a belief. It is also held that this is due, in a

measure, to silent, concealed discrimination, (exercised no longer on the basis of official circulars such as the celebrated circular of Mr. G.B. Pant's Government on recruitment to the UP police) by either the communal attitude of mind of the individual recruiters or by the pressures of powerful, entrenched castes, which tend to divide the spoils among themselves, leaving out the remainder indifferently in the cold. These too are facts of life, though it is always easy to exaggerate the case of discrimination, in the absence of any objective or quantitative checks.

Beyond the element of exclusion through discrimination, direct or indirect at the actual point of recruitment, is an equally patent disadvantage which keeps Muslims from obtaining a share in employment commensurate with their share in the total population. This is because of their educational and commercial backwardness compared to other segments of the population.

In 1974, it was estimated that there were about 50,000 Muslim students in Indian Universities and colleges. In that year (1973-74) the total number of university and college students in the country according to the UGC's (University Grants Commission) statistics was 2.23 million.

In other words, Muslim students approached barely a quarter of the number which should have been theirs had the Muslims been represented in the institutions of higher learning in proportion to their share of the total population of the country.

It is possible that the backwardness of Muslims is due in part to discriminatory practices in admissions to educational institutions. There are, however, other factors too which tend to explain this backwardness. In U.P. and other Hindi speaking areas, the Muslim middle classes were severely depleted in the post 1947 phase, lasting two decades. There were first, the migrations to Pakistan affecting in the main the Muslim educated strata; secondly, some sections dependent on zamindari tenures had their incomes reduced by the Zamindari Abolition Acts, being less able to subvert the provisions than others similarly placed; and, finally, the abolition of Urdu as a language of administration and education, which adver-

sely affected that very portion of the middle classes among Muslims which looked to employment at clerical levels, in lower Government service or in educational institutions. All these factors greatly pulled down the numbers of Muslims in educational institutions. Once this happened, a vicious cycle set in. The fewer the Muslims who graduated, the smaller the number who would get into white-collar employment jobs; and smaller still the number who could afford to send their children to schools and institutions of higher learning.

The rather lowly representation of Muslims in the Indian business world is also of some significance, inasmuch as it indicates that the expensive education given in high-quality institutions (public schools and the like) is still less available to Muslims. Here again an invidious cycle sets in, since firms tend to prefer the Public School and IIT products (and any decision purely on merit must tend to give preference to those who come through institutions providing more intensive instruction) and Muslims fall behind more and more in this area.

It is a perfectly valid thesis that the social structure of India today is a scandal, and that the salvation of Muslims can be found only in the overthrow of the present conditions and the formation of a socialist society in which the present points of control of power and wealth would be irrelevant; one would then set about dealing fairly and justly with all the various elements composing the people of India.

However, it cannot surely mean that we can leave the present problems of Muslims unattended till the great day comes. One has to remember that solving certain problems of Muslims as a minority does not mean that Muslims can be liberated from the hardships which befall them as wage-earners or peasants; such liberation is for the social revolution of the future. At present, one can speak only of the mitigation of the excessive hardships and disadvantages that they suffer as Muslims, and it is to this end that practical means may still be formulated within the framework of the country's existing regime. It is best to remember that several countries have dealt with their minority

problems fairly successfully within quite unabashedly bourgeois limits.

In formulating a positive public policy towards employment of Muslims, two employment sectors need to be distinguished, namely (a) the large number of manual jobs, not requiring any school, higher or technical education; and (b) those of higher levels requiring technical and educational qualifications. I am overlooking the problem of rural and agricultural employment, which is largely a matter of land-control and must depend on radical measures of land reform.

It is, of course, the former category (a) which matters to the large majority of Muslims. This sector in turn needs to be considered in two parts; (1) employment in Government services, and public sector undertakings and (2) private employment. The suggestions as to what measures and policies need to be adopted in respect of both now follow:

The Government and the public sector must, first of all, themselves appear as the model employers. In the unskilled jobs, the alleged Muslim backwardness should not count. Here the Muslims ought to be represented according to their proportion in the population because no qualifications are involved. I am not arguing that there must be a constitutional and legislative reservation, as exists for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. What can be done is simply to lay down guidelines for recruitment of Muslims (and other minorities) to manual and class-IV posts according to their population in well-designated regions, and to ensure that these levels be maintained in actual recruitment. Full data must be provided to Parliament and the State Assemblies by the various ministries and authorities of the Union and State Governments so as to ensure that the guidelines are being met in practice.

As for the private sector, it is pertinent to refer to the two major achievements of the Civil Rights movement in the United States in ensuring fair practices in employment of the Black and other members of other minorities.

There has been established by executive order an office of Federal Contract Compliance within the US Department of Labour. All contracts entered into by the US

Federal Government have a fair employment clause, which prohibits the contracting supplier as well as his suppliers from practising any discrimination in their employment policies. This is ensured by checking whether the minorities are represented on the labour rolls of these companies in proportion to their relative populations in the areas concerned. Since the number of large companies directly or indirectly involved in federal contracts in the US is very large, this measure has been of considerable effect in forcing the Big Business corporations to recruit large numbers of Afro-Americans, Hispanics and others in order to meet the fair employment criteria.

For companies outside the federal contracts system, the Equal Economic Opportunities Act, 1964, created the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) which is intended to check discrimination in employment based on race, colour, religion, sex or national origin. The Commission receives complaints of discrimination, which the Act has made a federal offence. If after an investigation, the EEOC finds substance in the charge, it is obliged to institute a kind of conciliation machinery. If this is unsuccessful the EEOC brings a suit against the employer in a Federal Court.

These are measures which our Government may do well to emulate. There is no reason why a law against discrimination could not be applied, in the first instance, to all companies employing more than 100 persons. Already the 'Provident Funds' of the employees of all firms with more than 10 employees each are placed with P.F. Commissioners, and the muster rolls are open to inspection by Factory Inspectors. A period could be fixed within which the firms could reform their recruitment policies; more stringent obligations could be set on those that wish to apply for licenses or government contracts. After a particular period, the continuance of discrimination could be deemed an offence, to be dealt with by tribunals on the lines of Labour Tribunals.

The question of employment in the higher jobs, where technical and educational qualifications are required, is more complex. There is no doubt that positive discrimination wherever it exists must be put an end to and the best way is to go on enlarging the area of recruitment to such

posts through objective tests as in the Union Governments Subordinate Services Examinations. These could be extended to cover time posts like those of Secondary School teachers, posts in public sector enterprises, etc.

Insofar as the recruitment of Muslims has been retarded by positive discrimination, such measures should reduce their disadvantage. But it cannot conceivably bring their numbers to anything in excess of the proportion currently borne by Muslim students to the total student strength in universities and colleges. They would still remain very far behind what is commensurate with their actual numbers in the general population.

A simple answer to this would be reservation in higher jobs or, at least, a system of guidelines of the kind I have suggested for the unskilled sector. It seems to me, however, that such a solution is not likely to be practical. The alternative is the nationally sounder one of remedying the Muslim backwardness in education.

In many states, schools and colleges are left to private enterprise, to be founded anywhere the entrepreneurs wished. This leaves large locations unserved. This should be corrected. Schools and colleges need to be established and sited with the purpose of catering to Muslim population. Wherever these have been left out in the school and college maps where the enrolment of Muslim students in existing schools and colleges is exceptionally low, the educational authorities must inquire into the cause and require administrators to take positive measures to increase Muslim enrolment. Particular attention has to be paid to the education of Muslim girls and women, who are particularly hurt by the traditional insistence on their seclusion. Figures of Muslim enrolment should be published so that the actual position be known to all; and a moral pressure be maintained to improve it.

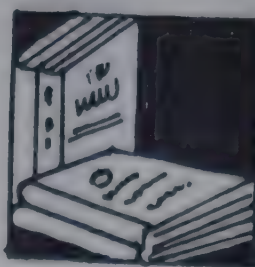
A proper policy towards Urdu must also be a part of any effort to improve the educational status of Muslims. Though for large numbers of Muslims in U.P. Hindi is now the only language they can read and write, it is still true that Urdu remains for most Muslims the language of the home, and therefore the most natural one to serve as a medium of instruction.

It is measures such as these that should go a long way to enlarge the educational base among Muslims; from there, given discrimination free entry points, the recruitment of Muslims to higher jobs should expand proportionately.

The process would be greatly helped, of course, by the internal growth of a movement towards modern and scientific education among Muslims. The traditional opposition to women's rights (in the name of the so-called Muslim Personal Law) and to progressive ideas in general is certainly not conducive to the development of a secular, national spirit among Muslims. The sooner this is recognised by all the better.

In this note, I have repeatedly stressed the collection of information as to the proportion of Muslims in the labour force, government services, educational institutions etc. Owing to their Arabic and Persian names, Muslims are usually not difficult to identify once the names are entered anywhere. Before more refined methods are developed, collections of Government and private Muster-rolls, the Provident Fund Commissioners' records and enrolment registers of educational institutions, can be used, and with computer facilities available, the data can easily be stored and analysed. I would suggest that the Minorities Commission would be the best agency to collect and monitor such data and issue periodic findings. Not only would these be helpful to sincere policy-makers, but would also help creating a proper public opinion. For clearly it is the people of India as a whole who are going to be the arbiters in the matter; and for them to make a just and humane decision, they need to be informed.

Irfan Habib : Proposals For A Fair Employment Policy With Special Reference To Muslims — Business And Employment Bureau, New Delhi.

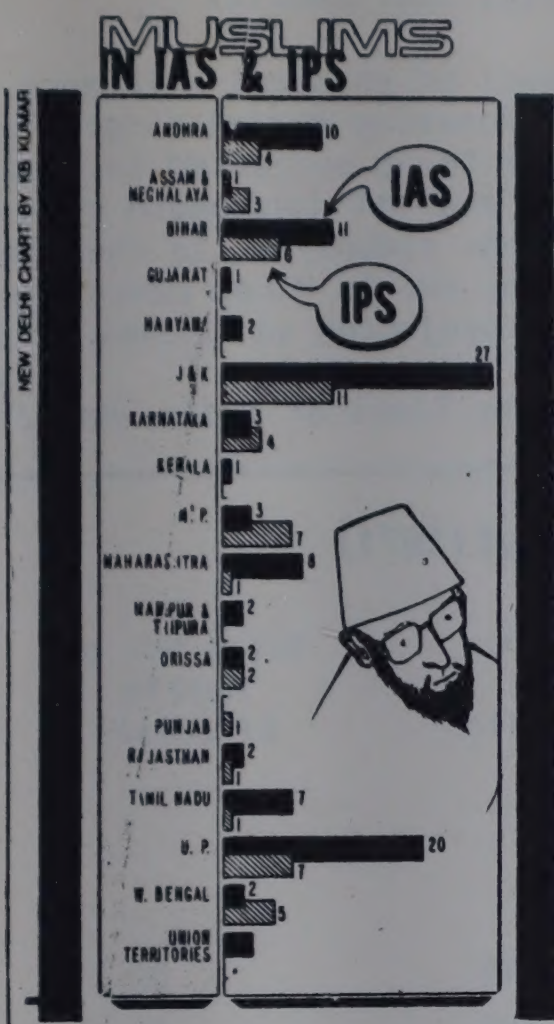


Opportunities

Inadequately Represented

It is often assumed that Urdu is the language of the Muslims in India. It should be remembered that all the Urdu-speaking

people in India are not followers of Islam. It is equally important to remember that Urdu is not the mother-tongue of all the Muslims in our country. For instance, according to the census of 1971, there were 61,418,269 Muslims in India while the number of Urdu-speaking people was 23,323,047. It is evident that in 1971, more than 50% of the Muslims in India had a mother-tongue other than Urdu.



The census reports also revealed that nearly half of the total number of the Urdu-speaking people in India reside only in two States of the Indian Union, namely, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

In 1947, the Muslims constituted more than a quarter of undivided India's total population. As a result of the Partition, their number was drastically reduced from nearly 95 million to 32 million. However, in the twenty-four years after the division of the country into two independent states of India and Pakistan, the Muslim population in India nearly doubled for, according to the Census of 1971, it was a little more than 61 million. Thus, the Muslims constituted 11.21% of India's population in 1971.

Though the Muslims constitute the second largest religion in our country, they are in a majority only in one state (Jammu and Kashmir) and one Union Territory (Lakshadweep) out of 22 states and 9 Union Territories in the Indian Union. They enjoy the status of a dominant majority only in 9 out of 356 districts in India (Anantnag, Baramula, Doda, Lakshadweep, Mallapuram, Murshidabad, Punch, Rajauri and Srinagar). They form more than a quarter to one-half of the total population in 12 districts. The total number of districts in which the Muslim population is more than 20% does not exceed forty. This means that it is only in these forty districts that the Muslims can influence the political process in general and the electoral process in particular. → *



Letters

Seeking Modernism

Sir, - The Indian Muslim is the ultimate tragedy of partition. One out of every eight Indians is a Muslim. With the exception of a thin upper crust, the Indian Muslim lives in abject poverty and squalor. There is hardly a Muslim middle class. Statistics reveal that Muslims are way behind even their Dalit brothers in economic and educational terms.

The Muslims elite is usually afraid about any linkage with the Muslim mass. Political parties tend to view Muslims as a mere

vote bank to be encashed at election time, and then quietly forgotten until the next election.

The Indian Muslim is desperate to move into the twentieth century. He seeks modernism that is compatible with Islam. He is not interested in such subjects as Aligarh or the conversion of Dalits into Islam. He wants to improve his socio-economic status.

Dr. J.S. Bandukwala.

The Times of India, April 13, 1983.

Sir, - Dr. J.S. Bandukwala's letter somehow gives one the impression that the Indian Muslim of today is nothing but a helpless vegetable. Which he is not.

What is basically an internal problem, is something really more serious. The Bohras,

the Khojas and the Memons, who are within the frame of the Islamic community (having been converted at various stages en masse to Islam) and who enjoy power and wealth, have shut themselves off from the general mass of the Muslim community and who do not, perhaps as a rule, offer the meanest economic opportunity to their own brethren belonging to the rank and the file of the community. This intra-communalism in Muslim society has placed a serious brake on the progress of Indian Muslims, particularly in Gujarat and Maharashtra.

W.M. Shaikh.

The Times of India, May 25, 1983.

Sir, - Mr. W.M. Shaikh in attempting to take a dispassionate look at the problems of Indian Muslims (April 23/24) has erred on the side of being overly complacent and simplistic. Yes, economic competition

has become increasingly sharp but to say that all communal riots stem from that is too sweeping a conclusion. The problems of the Indian Muslims are both of the heart and also of the mind. Denied educational opportunities, jobs and the means of earning a decent livelihood the Muslim in India is a cornered individual. He struggles incessantly but gets nowhere because both power and resources are in the hands of parochial individuals.

At the level of physical existence, there is the suffocating mental siege that Muslims are being subjected to. National programmes and functions begin with a distinctly Hindu symbolism. Is the state not secular? Why should Hindu practices and customs be projected as national customs?

Hassan Aly

The Times of India, May 25, 1983

Muslims In The Central Secretariat (1971)

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL

326, V Main, I Block

Koramangala

Bangalore-560034

India

Central Secretariat Service :

	Total No. of Officials	Total No. of Muslim Officials
1. Selection Grade I	140	02
2. Grade I	395	05
3. Section Officers	1666	12
4. Assistants	4507	19

Central Secretariat Stenographers :

	Total No. of Officials	Total No. of Muslim Officials
1. Selection Grade	130	N11
2. Grade I	195	N11
3. Grade II	1954	07
4. Grade III	1326	01

Central Secretariat Clerical Service :

	Total No. of Officials	Total No. of Muslim Officials
1. Upper Division Clerks	2511	09
2. Lower Division Clerks	6585	30
3. Class IV	5381	39

* Opportunities cont'd

From "Muslims And Scheduled Castes Since Independence" by Dr. Y.D. Phadke, Lala Lajpatrai Memorial Lecture Series (No. 6), 1977 - 78.

Factsheet aims at providing information on issues which are socially relevant. The need for such a venture is emphasised by the biased reportage of a large section of the media whose coverage on several subjects is either non-existent or one-sided. Factsheet is a collective venture, sponsored by the Centre for Education and Documentation. It seeks to enlist the help of journalists, lawyers, students, activists and professionals who feel concerned about this situation and want to contribute towards changing it.

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